THE CHALLENGE

AND OTHER TALKS WITH BOYS & GIRLS

J. G. STEVENSON

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THE REV. W. W. BELLINGER

THE CHALLENGE

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THE CHRIST OF THE CHILDREN.

With Twelve Illustrations on Art Paper.

W.W.B.

THE CHALLENGE

AND OTHER TALKS WITH BOYS AND GIRLS

BY

REV. J. G. STEVENSON

Author of "The Christ of the Children"

WITH EIGHT ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. H. ROBINSON

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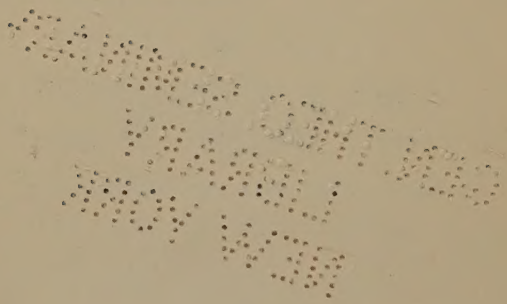

TO

F. A. A.

WHO FIRST GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY
OF WRITING FOR CHILDREN
AND UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES
MANY OF THESE ADDRESSES
FIRST SAW THE LIGHT

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THE CHALLENGE

It was New Year's Eve hundreds of years ago, and the King had bidden his lords and ladies and knights and squires to a party. They had put on their best clothes and had climbed up through the snow to where the old Castle was gay with a thousand lights; and they were talking together and singing to the harps and were having a beautiful time. But suddenly there rang out below the Castle wall the fierce note of a bugle. They stopped their merry-making to listen, and again the bugle called from somewhere nearer. At once the lords and knights said to the King: "A challenge, your Majesty! What enemy comes at such a time as this?" And they ran together to the great outer gate and looked hard through the dark across the moat. Soon up the rising road there came a warrior riding on a horse, and as he got near the edge of the water he sounded another mighty blast that echoed through the Castle and brought pain to those who heard. Then he reined in his charger and sat still. "Bring a torch!" cried the King;

and someone held the light high, so that beneath its red glare the company saw that the newcomer had his visor up. And though his face was sad, he looked so handsome that the ladies cried: "How beautiful!" But the men called out: "Lower the drawbridge! Out with the guard! Capture the varlet that challenges us thus and spoils our mirth!" In a moment the chains of the lowering bridge clanked and rumbled, and six brave men of the King's bodyguard put spurs into their horses. As soon as they started to pursue the stranger, he wheeled his horse round and began to gallop away; and when he turned, there was something about his appearance from the rear that made all who saw him feel cowards and helpless. But the guards were six to one, and they rode after him. In an hour they came back, tired, but without the stranger. They had lost him in the night. "It is useless to mourn," said the King. "Let us to our merrymaking once more."

* * * *

They started the festivities again, but before long the menacing sound of the bugle rang out as near as ever. "Your Majesty," said a young lord, "I have the swiftest horse in your kingdom. I will

pursue this troublous knight and either kill him or make him captive." The bugle blared again while he was speaking, and, with the King's consent, he started at once. While he was away, the company talked eagerly. "Who is this knight?" said one. "I do not know his name," spoke a beautiful lady, "but I have seen him before." "And I," "And I," called out people from all parts of the room. Ere long the young lord was with them again, and with shame he confessed he had ridden his hardest, but that the knight of the bugle travelled faster still. "And a strange thing," he added, "when he looked back, he seemed sorry I could not catch him up." This puzzled everybody, but they were more frightened than amazed when the bugle sounded again, and the King himself rode after the stranger, and returned crying out that pursuit was useless.

* * * *

"This is terrible," said the King. "He is no ordinary knight. If he were a coward, he would not come again and again; and yet when he is challenged, he always rides away so fast that none can catch him. Who knows his name?" No one answered, but a shrill treble voice called out: "Farver, I'se come to the party." The King

looked, and though he was troubled, he laughed, for there was his small boy, who had crept out of bed and come into the room in his night-clothes and with bare feet. The little lad smiled out of sleepy eyes and added: "I heard the bugle and it wakened me all up. Where is the knight?" "What do you know about the knight?" asked his royal father. "I knows him very well," came the answer. "I ride my pony with him, and the hermit told me all about him." "Who is he?" everyone asked at once, "and what does the hermit say?" "His name," said the boy, "is Opportunity. It is a long name, and he spells it with a capital O. The hermit told me he comes to boys and girls and grown-up folk and invites them to accompany him; and those who ride with him at once have chances of being good and doing things that please Christ. But if people do not ride with him the first time he asks, they are sorry afterwards, for he comes back and troubles them, and they try to go after him, but they can never catch him up. The hermit said he has a name for his bugle. He calls it Conscience." "Oh," said the King, "I understand, little man; we have all let many chances of being better and doing good slip by during this year, and this has been God's way of telling us that we have

not been as much like Christ as we ought during the last twelve months. Even children have not always spoken the truth, nor learnt their lessons every time, nor always been good-tempered when they were teased; but to-morrow is New Year's Day, and we can make a fresh start. Let us tell the great, loving Father how sorry we are for the past, and ask Him to help us to live so that next New Year's Eve, Opportunity may not come back like this and remind us of neglect and lost chances, and make us sad because we cannot catch him up." Then his nurse came and carried the small boy back to bed.

THE CHICKEN OF PERUGIA

Perugia is an old town that is built high on a hill in Italy, and its back streets, which twist down the hillsides like a badly made corkscrew, are narrow and full of straight, tall houses. One day, in one of these same back streets, some children were having a good time. It was summer, and three sat on a doorstep and others sat on the ground, and two stood, and all of them laughed and shouted "Viva," and clapped grimy little hands and made merry together; and because I always like to learn new games, I went and joined in. The three on the doorstep moved up to make room, and I sat down and made ready to clap hands with the rest. But when I saw what they were doing I was not at all sure it was the kind of game for a minister to play.

In the middle of our little group was a grey chicken, who must have been almost four months old, and it looked as though he was having the worst time of any of us. For a small boy held him by the back, while a little girl tied a string in

three loose knots round his right leg just above his foot. I have often heard that Italian children play cruel games with live birds, and it hurt me to think that the poor chicken might be treated badly. But I did not go away. I decided to wait and see, and to interfere if the bird was not given fair play. It is not really good fun when children get sport out of the pain of animals. Even pinching the cat seems nicer to you than it does to pussy.

* * * *

When the small girl had finished tying the string the boy let the chicken go, and I expected to see him flutter and flap his wings and try to escape. But he did nothing of the sort. Amid the delighted cries of the children he cocked his head on one side and looked round. Then he bent his head down and had a good look at the leg round which the string had been fastened. Next he lifted up his foot and looked hard and close until he saw just how things were. Then he put his foot down and gave a sudden peck, and one of the knots came untied. This excited us very much, and the children clapped and said words that, being translated, meant, "Long live the chicken." He, however, took little notice of our applause. He

was busy pecking, and soon another knot was untied. "Bravo!" cried out the boys and girls. The chicken gave us one look and then managed an extra powerful peck, and the string fell off his leg. As soon as he was free he never even waited to say 'Good-bye!' He just ran, and the children laughed again to see him go. Then we had chocolate all round, and I left.

* * * *

Have you got a string tied round your leg? Perhaps you have, for there are all kinds of string. When boys and girls are lazy and shirk lessons and errands, it just means that round one leg is tied the string of laziness. Children who never take trouble, and who add up without thinking, or are slovenly in dress, or have untidy hair, are really held by the string of carelessness. Boys who scowl when things are not as they like, and who will not speak to the others unless they do as they want, are tied tight by a string called sulks. Small girls who 'prink' before a looking-glass and admire their foolish little selves, are held by the string of vanity; and there are many other kinds of string. When you undress yourself to-night, you just look and see whether there is a string round your leg. And

if you cannot find one ask mother about it. Then when you know what string holds you, remember the chicken of Perugia, and do two things. First, try hard and untie the knots. Second, as soon as you are free, get as far from the string of laziness, or carelessness, or sulks, or pride, as you can.

The tales in this book have been written to help you to do all this; and as you read them you must try and become the kind of boy or girl that is pleasing to our great Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

THE EXPRESS WORM

When the breeze blew the first Rose of summer nodded saucily on her tree, as if to say, "Was there ever so fine a flower in the garden before?" While she was thinking a great deal too much of her pretty self she suddenly saw a little red thing protruding from the earth, and though she knew somehow she ought not to look, yet she looked again and again, for she was like boys and girls, who always feel they must do what they ought not. The red thing twisted and twirled and got longer, and at last the first Rose of summer said, "Whoever are you?" "I," came the answer, "am the Express Worm." "Oh!" replied the Rose. She didn't know what the name meant, but she just pretended, because she did not want to appear ignorant. But at last her curiosity made her ask, "What is an Express Worm?" The red thing gave an extra wriggle to show he was cross, and then said severely, "An Express Worm is a worm that can travel an inch a minute. There is only one of us, and I am him!" "Ho, ho!" spoke back the Rose, "what grammar!"

Then she chuckled because she was pleased to catch him like that. But the Express Worm took no notice, and simply said in a gentlemanly voice, "Have you any lodgings to let?" "No!" shouted the Rose, horrified at the very idea. "Well, but," coaxed the Express Worm, "I am looking for summer quarters, and I pay well. If you let me have just one petal to live in, I will crawl about the garden and injure all your enemies!" "What!" asked the Rose, "will you hurt that old wall-flower who says I am related to the common wild rose, and that conceited scarlet geranium, and ——" But the Express Worm never waited for her to finish. He saw she was willing, and he slithered up the tree and curled up in the centre of the blossom.

* * * *

Then the trouble began. Soon after he settled in, the Rose did not feel at all well. Then she felt very bad, for the Worm began to eat one of her leaves, and she heard him whispering, "Very good feed. Rose petals to eat and dew to drink, and the Express Worm will never get thin. Hooray for a tight skin!" This was terrible; and when she asked him to move he just munched another petal.

Such conduct made her weep all over; and when the Bee arrived as usual, she was still crying. "Oh, dear!" said the Bee, "damp again. Getting your honey will give me rheumatism." "Please, friend Bee," wailed the Rose, "do help me. The Express Worm is inside, and he is eating me all up, and I am not well, and I am miserable." And she wept again. The Bee looked solemn at once, and said, "Let me see. Why, that's no Express Worm. That is Sin!" "Oh, no," came the answer; "he told me his name himself, and I let him lodge with me because he promised to hurt all my enemies." "Stupid!" retorted friend Bee. "Sin never gives his real name. He always pretends he is some one else. What were you doing when he came?" "I was feeling proud, and I didn't think there was so much of him. There was only a very little of him that peered from the ground at first." "It is always like that," was the answer. "To be naughty always gives another sin a chance. And sin takes in everybody when it promises them revenge. And no sin ever seems so big at first as it becomes afterwards. But keep your petals up! You will know better another time." "But what can I do about it?" asked the poor, penitent Rose. "Well," said the Bee, "if you were a little boy or a little girl I should

have to scold you and tell you that sin comes in any form that can deceive, and always does harm when they let it have its way with them. I should have to say that conceit always attracts sins that deceive, and that pride and a love of revenge bring certain misery in the end." "Anything else?" queried the flower. "Yes. I think I should have to add that all children who have let sin enter into them must pray for pardon to someone who is often called the Rose of Sharon. All boys and girls do not know Him by that name, but they can ask mother who He is, and she will tell them how He can help them to do better." "I mean to do better," faltered the Rose. "Oh, you!" said the Bee, not unkindly, "you're only a poor silly flower. If you were a little man or a little woman I should expect something a great deal better. But as you are just a Rose I will get my friend the West Wind to blow hard and sweep the Express Worm right away." And it did. A few minutes later the Express Worm said to himself, "Am I a dragon-fly, or what?" When he reached the ground he knew.

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT

WHAT presents are you going to have for Christmas? You must wait and see, for it would never do for me to tell secrets. But I can tell you about a little girl who once had a very curious Christmas gift. All boys and girls who read this are sure to sing at Christmas-time that beautiful hymn which begins—

> "Christians, awake, salute the happy morn
> Whereon the Saviour of the world was born."

The hymn was one of the Christmas presents given to a little girl just one hundred and sixty-one years ago.

* * * *

A hymn seems to some of you a strange Christmas present, but I will explain. The little girl's name was Dolly Byron, and her father was a poet. A few days before the twenty-fifth of December, Mr. Byron was romping with his daughter, when she began to talk about the Christmas gifts she expected. I am not sure, but I think she asked what her father was going to give her; in any case, he promised to

write her a Christmas hymn all to her very own self. She was so pleased that the next day and the day after she kept on reminding him. On Christmas Day, when she got down to breakfast, there were several gifts for her, and among them was a paper package carefully folded, and with her father's handwriting outside. She reached out for it first of all and tore it open. Inside she found a piece of paper with "Christmas Day for Dolly" on the top, and below came the beautiful hymn. It is kept still, just as it came to her, in the library of Chetham's Hospital in Manchester. Of course, the paper is crumpled; but, as I read the other day, that is, perhaps, because Dolly carried it about in her little pocket.

* * * *

Was not that a strange Christmas present? When you sing the hymn I want you to remember how it was written. One thing I like about Dolly is that, after all, she was not selfish, and did not keep it to herself. She gave it to a newspaper gentleman, who printed it, and then someone else wrote music for it; and so ever since other girls and boys have been able to sing it. Which of your Christmas presents are you going to give away

again? Can you not spare just one for some little child who is poor, and perhaps will have no Christmas gift at all unless you send one of yours? If you do this you will very much please Jesus Christ. You know that when He came to earth as a little baby in a Bethlehem stable He was the first Christmas present boys and girls and grown-up people ever had, and He is the best they ever will have. For He was God making Himself into a present for everyone. Ask mother or father to explain this to you, and read the next story soon after this.

ST. FRANCIS AND THE NIGHTINGALE

THERE was once a very great saint whose name was Francis. He lived more than six hundred years ago in and near the town of Assisi, in Italy; but people have not forgotten him, because he was such a very good man, and was fond of fun, and liked to make everyone happy, and loved Christ. He wore a long tunic, like a brown dressing-gown, tied round his waist with a cord, and in this dress he went to lots of places telling grown-up folk and boys and girls that God loves them so much that He is very sorry when they are naughty. Whenever he thought of the love of the great Father he became so glad that sometimes he smiled, and often he sang out loud; and once he danced for joy, though other people were there to see. He was so anxious for all the world to know what God is like that he even went into the fields and woods and told the lambs and the little birds that their Father in heaven cared for them all. And the other men hardly ever laughed at him, but instead they told each other how fine it was to know someone whose

religion made him so like Christ that he was hardly ever miserable. This was right, for religion is not scolding and pulling a long face and frowning at play. It is looking to Jesus Christ and being as good as you can, and being happy because you are trying to be good.

* * * *

When he cared to do so, Francis often went outside the town and lived in a cave hidden among a lot of trees. There he slept on the ground, with a hard bit of wood for a pillow, and with no bed-clothes except his cloak. This cannot have been very comfortable, and he slept so lightly that one night he was awakened by the singing of a nightingale. "Dear me," he said to himself, "here am I trying to sleep while my little brother, the nightingale, is singing the praises of God. I am ashamed of myself, and I will get up and sing God's praises as well. I will call Brother Lion and tell him we three must have a competition, for we cannot be beaten by a bird." Brother Lion was not a wild beast, but a dear, meek friend of St. Francis, who in fun called him "Lion" because he was so like a lamb. Lots of children are like lions when you first wake them, for they are cross until they are

"STOOD UNDER THE TREE ON WHICH THE NIGHTINGALE WAS TRILLING"

washed. Brother Lion was not cross, but he called out that he had no voice. He preferred to be like the good little lambs that sleep all night, and he would not leave the comfortable floor on which he was lying. So Francis went out into the wood by himself, and stood under the tree on which the nightingale was trilling his music, and hour after hour he sang psalms and hymns to the glory of God. But the more he sang the more Brother Nightingale tuned up, until he nearly burst his little throat. Francis was a good singer, but the bird beat him altogether, and at last he was quite worn out and had to give up. He made no excuses for being beaten. He just owned up like a man, and acknowledged the victory of Brother Nightingale, and went away and left him singing still.

* * * *

Early in the summer nightingales begin to sing in England, and it is nice when you hear them to think they are celebrating the praises of God. Do any little readers feel inclined to get out of bed some night and enter into a competition? It would be very draughty in the woods, and rather cold, especially if you ran out just as you were. Of course you would look more like St. Francis in his tunic,

but mother would never allow it, and mother is always right. Yet everyone can sing praises to God. When you sing, "We are but little children weak," God is more pleased to hear your little voice than if all the birds in the world sang together. Besides, when you speak happy sentences or say kind things, and when you offer up your little prayers to the great Father, He always hears music and is pleased. To say nasty words, and to speak selfishly or crossly, is to hurt God very much. But whenever boys and girls pray earnestly to the Father who loves them, and whenever they say caressing words or try and cheer some one who is sad, and whenever they sing their little hymns, there is joy in heaven, and some voice is sure to say, "There! Listen to the praises of God. That is the kind of music the great Father loves."

FIREWORKS

It was the night of the fourth of November, and the sky-rocket and the cracker were side by side on a table. Someone had unpacked them ready for the next evening, when they were to be part of a special lot of fireworks a kind gentleman was going to let off to please some boys and girls. Usually a sky-rocket is too proud to take notice of a cracker, and behaves to it like ill-bred children do to those who are poorer. But this night they were so close that he just had to talk, and because he did not like it very much he made up his mind to say as many nasty things as he could think of without any trouble. "Hello, old hop and roar!" he began. "Good evening," answered the cracker. "But I don't roar, I snap." "Nice tale that," was the rude reply; "why, you really make a row like a sheep with a winter cough. But what does it matter what you do?—you're only a cracker. Now, I go whizz-z-z-z miles high, and then I shed a hundred green stars, and next some red ones, and last of all I throw out a great golden rain, and all

the boys and girls say 'O-o-o-o-h!' When you're alight, someone calls out: 'Mind your skirts!' and that is all." Such unkind words made the cracker feel miserable and irritable, and at first he was inclined to say something spiteful; but he conquered his temper and whispered to himself: "I can't help that. Perhaps if I was on a long stick, I might be different. And if I'm only a cracker, I'm going to do my best to-morrow night, and jump and snap and skip and crack for all I'm worth. Perhaps someone who understands will be as pleased with me as with the sky-rocket. Won't I make a row!" The rocket overheard some of this, and said more nasty things. But the cracker knew that if you never answer back, others get tired of abusing you, so he said nothing.

* * * *

The next morning all the children but one in a certain house began to whisper together. The one who did not whisper sat on a chair next to the table and ran his finger-tips over a piece of paper in which holes had been pricked in all sorts of funny ways. Suddenly he lifted up his head and said: "Why, you're talking about fireworks. You

forget that if I can't see, I can hear better than you think." The others looked foolish for a moment, and then the elder sister answered: "We didn't want you to hear, Thomas, for fear you wouldn't like to be left behind when we go out to see the fireworks let off to-night. You know it is no good a blind boy going to see fireworks." The sightless eyes filled with tears, and the little boy at first said almost crossly: "If I am blind, I can read in bed after the light is out. That is more than you can do." "Yes, dear," said another sister quietly; "but you read with your finger-tips. You can't see fireworks with your fingers." This made the blind boy laugh, and then he asked: "Is there nothing to listen to?" "Well," said his brother, "you can ask mother, and if she'll let you come, you can hang on to my arm, only you must leave go when I fire off the cracker I've been promised." "Thanks, old chap," came the eager reply. Then the blind boy felt his way upstairs and asked his mother. She looked sad for a moment, and then she smiled and said "Yes." "Hooray!" said the blind boy. "You're such a fine old mother! I wish I could see your face. Let me kiss you. Why, mother, how is it that your cheek is wet?" He kissed her, and went down

two steps at a time, calling out, "Basil, I say, I can go!"

* * * *

They were all out in the field at six that night. "What is this, Basil?" asked his sightless brother. "It is a sky-rocket," was the answer; "it's gone up with a whizz, and it's green stars and red stars and yellow rain." "I heard the whizz," came the reply, "and I do wish I could see. It is hard lines to be blind on the Fifth of November. I don't mind it now and then, but——" "Cheer up, youngster!" broke in Basil. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll keep my cracker till afterwards, and I'll give you the light and guide your hand, and you shall set it afire." "Oh, thanks," said the little man who was blind; "let us keep it till we go home, for mother and you and me." "All right," said Basil. At half-past seven mother and father and the others were in the garden all together, and Basil took a cracker out of his pocket and put it on the top of two old biscuit-tins he had piled up in the walk. "Now, old man," he said to his blind brother, "take this match in your fingers and strike it, and then let me guide you by the wrist." The blind boy felt which was the right end of the match, and

then he struck, and his brother helped him apply the flame to the cracker. It smouldered for a half-minute and then began to bang. "Oh, I say," cried the lad who could not see, "what fun! This suits me better than sky-rockets with green stars. Go on, bang again! Crash, crack! What a fine row! This is something like! Hurrah! and hooray!" "Hooray!" called out all the others. When they had finished, the blind boy said with delight, "Thank you so much, Basil; I did enjoy that." "Very glad," said Basil, "there was something for you. It really was a fine cracker. I think it did its best. What do you think, mother?" "Why," answered their mother, "I'm proud of my Basil for giving his cracker to Thomas, and I'm glad Thomas remembered to thank him. Children who are generous and grateful always please God. It really was a fine cracker, and I'm not surprised that my little blind son was pleased with it. Don't forget that if we do our best, there is always someone who is sure to be pleased with us. Sometimes it is a boy who can't see, and sometimes——" Here the father broke in gently: "When boys and girls do the very best they can, Jesus Christ is always satisfied with them."

THE TRIUMPH

Once upon a time there was a King who was coming home from the wars, and because he had been victorious his subjects had voted him a triumph. A triumph was a solemn procession got together in honour of the hero whom it accompanied on his return to his own city. The one our story is about was headed by some wise old judges and some members of Parliament. Behind them were trumpeters, who every now and then blew hard and made a great noise. Next came a lot of men carrying arms and flags taken from the enemy, and holding on high models of the forts and cities the soldiers had captured. Behind them shuffled lowing oxen with gilded horns, then walked with bent heads some of the conquered prisoners, and immediately after them came the King himself, sitting in a chariot decorated with laurel-leaves and drawn by four splendid horses. He wore magnificent clothes, all gold-coloured and purple, and in one hand he was holding a great ivory sceptre and in the other he had a big branch of a tree. In the

carriage with him was a slave, who stood up and held a gold crown just over his head, and who every now and then stooped and whispered in the King's ear that he must not get conceited. Last of all tramped the soldiers, cheering and singing and telling the people, crowded by the roadside, of the bravery of their general.

* * * *

Among the folk, waiting for the procession, there was a little boy who had gathered his white tunic around him and wriggled to the very front. When he heard the trumpets and saw the dust rising, he stamped his sandals on the ground and said things that meant "Hooray!" On marched the procession, and he liked all of it. As the King's chariot came nearer he became more and more excited, and as it got quite opposite to him he actually ran into the road and tried to get into it as it was going. In a moment soldiers took hold of him with rough, strong arms, and one of them laughed and said, "No, no." But the little boy still struggled and pushed, and at last a soldier shouted at him, "Be quiet, boy! Do you not understand that this is our Emperor?" The little fellow laughed and shouted back, "He may be

your Emperor, but he is my father." The soldiers recognised their young prince, and at once they saluted. The King heard the voice of his little boy and smiled with gladness, and stopped the chariot and took him in; and then the procession moved on.

* * * *

Must he not have been a happy boy? And was it not nice of his father the Emperor to let him ride with him? Did you ever think that God is just as kind as was that King? Of course He is your King, and all boys and girls ought to obey Him. When they are tempted to be cross, they should say to themselves, "I must not be angry, for my great King has commanded me to be good-tempered." When they are tempted to tell lies, they ought to say to themselves, "I cannot fib, for God orders all children to speak the truth." God is our King, and we must all do what He tells us. But God is more than a King. Far more than He is our Emperor, He is our Father; and boys and girls should always try and picture Him as a great big Father who loves all children, and is always happy about them except when they do wrong. Even then He is still your Father, and your sins

hurt Him because He loves you so much. How *can* boys and girls go on hurting Him with temper and lies and disobedience? Let us all try and obey Him because He loves us so much. And, do you know, I am sure that will be easier if we think of Him as a Father even more often than we picture Him as a King?

THE TOAD AND THE FIELD-MOUSE

Once upon a time there was a field-mouse. He was a young field-mouse, and he lived in a hole in a bank with his mother and one brother and two sisters. One day, though his mother had told him not to go more than thirteen inches from home, he began to think that was wrong and decided he knew better than anyone else. So he slid down the bank, and with a last look to see if his mother was watching, he ran across the ditch and up the other side and began to play in the field. Before long he came across a big stone. Now, his mother had asked him never to climb big stones, but his mother was not there. Of course, he did not really forget she had forbidden it, but he muttered to himself, "I really must see the view," and up he went to the very top. He was just beginning to feel how clever he was when—no one knows how it happened, and he could never tell—he fell right down the other side of the stone at least seven inches, and hurt himself so badly that he could not move. So there he lay, squealing because he could

not cry, and thinking to himself, "This is just what mother said would happen, and I expect she'll be very cross if she isn't too frightened because I'm hurt." He made all sorts of mournful noises, but no one noticed him until a butterfly came by, and when he saw its long dark body and its beautiful primrose wings moving through the air he called for it to stop. The butterfly, who wanted a rest, lit on a flower and said, "Well, what's the matter?" "Oh," came the answer, "I've fallen off a stone and hurt myself. Please tell my mother." "Not I," said the butterfly; "lower animals that haven't wings shouldn't be on the top of stones. Serve you right." And away he went. The field-mouse thought he was very cruel, and for once the field-mouse was right. And just as he was beginning to squeal again he heard, oh! such a quiet rustle in the grass, and there was a newt who was looking at him from out of bright oval eyes. For a minute the field-mouse looked back again and saw that the newt had got on a shiny green coat with dark spots and streaks, and down his middle there ran an orange-coloured band. He imagined a newt dressed like that was sure to be a gentleman, and he therefore asked him if he could not carry him home. But the newt turned to and fro in the sun and said,

"Not I! You'd dirty my fine clothes; and, besides, I'm very brittle, and a great lump like you might break me in two." Then he rustled away again. The field-mouse felt very miserable; but all at once he forgot everything except a great toad that came near. Toads are never pretty, and this one was uglier than usual; indeed, he looked so very ugly that the poor mouse was afraid to say anything, so the toad had to speak first. "Hello," he said, "young Master Field-Mouse! Quite still? I declare you must be hurt." "I am," said the field-mouse, "I can't move." "Dear me," said the toad, "how are you going to get home?" Then he did not say any more, for he understood; and, besides, he knew it is not nice to tease people who are really in trouble. So he turned round and offered him his back. But the field-mouse said, "I don't think I can climb any more to-day, thank you." "Oh, come along," croaked the toad, encouragingly, "try hard; I've got a broad back and there's plenty of room." And because he was spoken to so kindly, somehow he did manage to climb up, and the toad travelled all the way home with him. Can you not fancy how his mother greeted him? Three days later, when he was better, she was calling him to his lessons and he

said, "Mother, I learnt two lessons the other day." "Well, what did you learn?" she asked. "I learnt never to disobey my mother." "Well," she said, "all children ought to know that." "Yes, mother," he said, "and I learnt something else from the toad." "And what was that?" "Well, mother, the nice-looking butterfly wouldn't help, and the newt was afraid of dirtying his best clothes, but the toad, who wasn't pretty at all, he carried me home. I think he must be very nice inside. And I think it's better like that than the other way." "Quite right," said the mother mouse; "why even human boys and girls sometimes think that if they have nice faces and pretty clothes it does not matter how they behave. It is nice to look nice but it is much better to be nice inside." "Dear me," broke in the little mouse, "I must not forget that; but, mother, I'm not really handsome, you know." "You'll do," came the reply, "for if you are not pretty you can make what you do beautiful. Kind hearts are better than pretty faces, and to be sympathetic and to help others who are miserable is better than wearing fine clothes. Now, off you go to your lesson in nest-building." And the little field-mouse obeyed his mother at once.

OLD FATHER TIME

One New Year's Eve the small girl was trudging through the dark with her bundles, and her little feet were treading along a meadow path where she had never been before. Suddenly she saw the glimmer of a lantern and then a gate on which the light showed that someone had newly cut the date of the next year. On a stile by the side of the gate sat old Father Time; and the little girl was not afraid for he is always kind to children. She was only just a little startled when he said in a deep voice, "I am waiting for you, little girl, to help you over the stile. You see, this is the last hour of the old year, and the stile is the way into the new one. It is very late for you to be out alone, so I thought I'd wait and help you with your bundles." "Now, I do call that nice of you," answered the small child; "could you lift me and the bundles together?" "Well," said Father Time, "I think, perhaps, we had better leave one behind. What have you got in them?" The little girl did not like this question, but she spoke

"I AM WAITING FOR YOU, LITTLE GIRL, TO HELP YOU OVER THE STILE."

up and said what was in a few of them. "That is kindness," she said, as she pointed, "and that is company manners, and that is ordinary politeness, and that is keep-at-it glue to make me stick to one thing at once, and that is smiles, and this is bad temper." "The last," spoke gravely Father Time, "is the one we will leave behind." "Oh, no," said the little girl, getting cross; "no one will mind me if I lose my bad temper. With it I get my own way at school, and frighten the servants, and do lots of things. Let's leave politeness." "No," answered Father Time, "we'll leave bad temper. Smiles will help you a lot more if only you would learn. See, I will show you." And he pulled his wallet round and took out a big black bottle labelled "Oil of Wisdom." With some of the oil he anointed her eyes, and she saw—what do you think she saw?

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First of all she saw a place in India. Somehow she knew it was Calcutta, and there in a narrow street was an elephant standing quite still. She could only see its back, and she heard someone say it had come from near the Botanic Gardens over the river, and had crossed the bridge all right; but now it had turned sulky in the narrow street and

would not move any nearer to Dum Dum, where it was going. This had made its driver very angry, and he had got down, and now he and other men were prodding it with pointed things, and beating it with sticks, and shouting and calling it names ; and yet it did not move. At last the men got tired and were quiet, and the small girl saw a brown boy slip round the elephant and pat it, and murmur kind things and urge it to start. And it blew one trumpet-blast and started off for Dum Dum just as if it had suddenly read a label on its trunk.

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As it went away, the scene changed, and the little girl saw a missionary school in China. In the school was a yellow-faced lassie, who was trying to do a sum. She could not get it right, and she began to rub out things furiously, and got thoroughly cross. She tried again, and was wrong once more, and looked crosser than ever. Then she suddenly laughed at herself for being so silly, and did the sum all over again with a smiling face. This time it was right.

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When she had seen this, the little English girl rubbed the rest of the oil off her eyes, and looked at

Father Time, who was still sitting on the stile. "Well," he asked, "have you learned anything?" "Yes," said the small girl meekly, "the brown boy who coaxed the elephant, he taught me that lots of things you can't do with temper you can do with kindness. The cross men could not get the elephant to move." "Any lesson from China?" asked Father Time. "Yes," went on the little girl, "same kind of lesson. Do hard things with a smile, and they are much easier than when you get cross." "Now," said Father Time, "there is a lot more I could teach you. Don't you think you had better leave bad temper behind before we get over the stile into 1906?" "Please," answered the litle girl, "I'd like to." And he lifted her over, but they left the bundle of bad temper. "Be careful," said Father Time, "not to pick up another bundle of temper as you go along. Look in my Bible, and perhaps what you read will help." He reached into his wallet, and took out a book and showed some words. "Put off anger," was what the little girl read by the light of his lantern. Then she looked up and said, "Thank you, and a happy new year to you, Father Time." And she went away. But a minute after, Father Time heard her call out through the darkness, "I say, I'll tell other children, and perhaps if

some one prints what I've learnt they'll learn too." "That's right," called back Father Time, "and I'll meet you at the end of this year, and may be we'll leave another bundle of bad habits behind."

IN A CHINESE HOSPITAL

In China there is a place called Wuchang, and in Wuchang there are two hospitals which are served by kind doctors whom the London Missionary Society has sent out to look after sick people. One of these doctors is a lady, and she can tell lots of tales about her patients. This is a story she has told concerning a little girl who was a slave, which means that someone had bought her with money and was keeping her for the sake of the work she did. It makes Jesus Christ sad when children belong to anybody except those who care for them, and He feels worse when slaves are owned by people who treat them badly. No one looked after this little girl, and when it was cold her feet were so hurt by the frost that she became ill and could not work. Her heathen mistress did not like this, and one day she got very cross with the girl slave, and she took a red-hot iron and burned her on her legs and arms and head. This made the poor child cry terribly, but her cruel owner did not care, and she actually threw her out of the house into the road,

so that she might die in the wind and among the mud. But there was an old servant who lived in the same home, and she was so sorry for her that she went out and picked up the little girl and carried her gently to the hospital.

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There the doctor and the nurses spoke kindly to their young patient, and they undressed her very carefully, so as to hurt her body as little as possible, and then they put her to bed. But she could not believe that anyone could touch her except to hurt her, and she was so frightened that she screamed and called her new friends all sorts of names. However, no one was angry with her, for all were very sorry, and loved her too much, and besides this, they felt she did not know any better. So they went on trying to help her, and though she moved her wounded feet to try and stop them, they managed to bandage each foot and put soothing and healing things on cotton-wool, and covered up her burns. All this made her more and more terrified, and in her rage and fear she used to tear off again everything the doctor and nurses put on. Still, they were all patient with her, and at last she began to understand that she was with people who

cared for her and who wished to help her. After a day or two she got fond of her English helpers, and more than once she actually said that when she got better she would like to go to a boarding-school which another little girl told her belonged also to the missionaries. But on the fifth day after she entered the hospital she became so ill that she had to be moved into a room all by herself, and there lay until she died. As she drew nearer to that heaven in which all the children are always happy with Jesus, she felt a very great love for the foreigners who had been so good to her. She even seemed to care more for them than for the nurses, who were Chinese like herself. If the doctors went away from her bed she called out to them to come back; and more than once she said to them very sadly, "I am going to die, and I have no father and mother to cry for me; I want you to cry for me." After she was gone you may be quite sure that there were tears in the hospital; and I should not be surprised if as some children read this they feel a little lump in their throats.

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Poor little girl! Are you not glad the kind missionaries were there to help her? What would have happened if Jesus Christ had not put it into

their hearts to leave home and go and tend little sufferers like her? We cannot bear to think of it. But how nice it is to know that perhaps some of the pennies in your missionary box helped to pay for the bandages and the cotton-wool. Get the box full again as soon as you can, and perhaps the next time the money will go to some missionary who will be able to save a little slave girl from torture by telling her mistress of the love of Jesus. There is nothing like speaking to people of the tender heart of Christ if you want them to grow like Him. Would you like to be a missionary some day? You are too young yet, but you are not too young to think about it. Also you are not too young to pray, and I want you to ask mother if you may add a few sentences to your prayers to-night. These are they, and they are short, so that you can easily learn them:

"Lord Jesus, you are the great God, but you are my big Brother, and it makes me glad to know you care for me. It hurts when I think of men and women and boys and girls who do not know you love them. Send everywhere the news of the love of God, so that the older people may treat all children with kindness, and so that boys and girls may learn to love and obey them in return. In Thine own Name. Amen."

GIOTTO

Over six hundred years ago there was, in a country place in Italy, a shepherd boy called Giotto.

While his sheep were feeding he used to draw their pictures on rocks with a pointed stone, and though he was only ten years old he drew so well that a great artist named Cimabue asked his father to let him go to the great city of Florence and learn from him to be a painter. Giotto's father consented, and the boy began to work in the studio of his new friend. One day, when Cimabue was out, Giotto was overcome by a spirit of mischief. So he went to a portrait on which his master was spending his skill, and he painted a life-like fly right on its nose.

When Cimabue returned he thought the fly was real, and tried to flick it away with his finger. Then he and everyone else laughed, and no one was cross with the boy, because so long as you work really hard a little fun is good. The foolish and wicked children are those who care for nothing but play,

and who never work hard except where there is a lot to eat and only a little time to gobble it down.

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One day, when Giotto was a man, someone came to see him. The caller was an agent of the Pope, who wished to have some paintings done by the best artists in Italy. He had, therefore, sent his servant to get examples of the work of all great painters, and when he saw them he was going to decide to whom he would give the honour of employment by himself. What Giotto's caller wanted was a drawing or painting by which his skill might be judged. When he made his request Giotto took a piece of paper and made a circle on it with one twist of his wrist. Then he offered what he had done as a sample of his ability. The caller was angry, and asked for a painting or a drawing instead of a mere simple circle; but the artist said he could give him nothing else. The Pope's agent, therefore, took it, and later submitted it to his master, who at once picked it out from other work by different artists and asked what it meant. His servant told his story, and the Pope smiled and looked carefully at the plain circle. Then he said, " Let this artist be sent for; he has

done a simple thing so perfectly that I am sure he is the very man to paint the pictures I have in mind." Giotto went to Rome, and did some wonderful work that exists to this day.

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Is it worth while playing a straight bat at cricket? Is it worth the trouble to do a sum as accurately as you can? Is it any good for boys and girls to be careful to speak correctly? Does it matter about saying things in a gentle voice and never being hasty or gruff? Is it worth while to be polite to poor people or to tie your bootlace properly in the morning, or to mind about accents in your French exercise? Does it matter about exaggerating or forgetting to do exactly as mother tells you? The answer to all these questions is, "Yes." God sees all we do and hears all we say, and it pleases Him when small things are done as well as possible. Then, just as Giotto's circle got him the chance of painting pictures for the Pope, so if boys and girls do little things perfectly they are sure to have chances of doing very big things indeed. Who wants to play in the All England eleven or to be a great mathematician when he grows up? Who wishes to speak nicely and to have everyone like

her when she is a lady with long skirts and her hair up? I think I know. Be careful about little things now while you are a child, and you will have a much better chance of being the right kind of man and the proper sort of woman. Christ thinks a great deal of carelessness in sin, and He knows, and if we pray He will help us to avoid it.

THE PORTRAIT GALLERY

"TELL us," said the children to the old man, "the queerest dream you ever had." "Well," answered their aged friend, "once I dreamt I was a white rabbit with green eyes and a waistcoat pocket full of treacle!" "Oh, come," said Jimmy, "no nonsense! We mean a real sensible dream." "Like John Bunyan's," chimed in Mary. The old man looked solemn, all except his eyes, and replied, "There was only one John Bunyan, but once I had a dream about a boy." "About a boy?" repeated Harry. "Yes," said the aged one, "a boy—common noun, masculine gender, sometimes singular, and occasionally agrees with his sister." "Dear me," called out the children, "he is talking grammar again!" But the old gentleman took no notice of their interruption, and went on, "This boy had a picture gallery inside him." "What!" said Mary. "Yes," continued their friend, "and a pane in his head—I mean a pane of glass. It was a fairy who introduced me to him." "Tell us about him!" cried out two boys and a girl, all excitement. "Well," went on the tale, "I met the

fairy in the wood, and he said, 'Shall I whistle for the boy with a picture gallery inside him?' 'Certainly,' I answered; 'I like pictures next to chocolate and holidays.' The fairy whistled, and before long a big-headed boy with a sulky face came slowly through the bracken. 'Hello, Master Portrait Gallery,' quoth the fairy, 'didn't you want to come?' 'No,' said the boy crossly. 'H'm,' replied the fairy, 'did'ms! Take off your hat, my son, and let the gentleman see.' The boy took off his hat, and came and stood with his back to me, and I was never more astonished in my life. Instead of hair, in the middle of his head was a big piece of glass. 'Look inside,' said the fairy; 'the glass magnifies.' I looked, and inside the boy was what looked like a big picture gallery. On its walls were a lot of pictures, and I saw that they were all faces. I looked again, and I saw they were all the same face—that of the boy. 'Goodness me!' I muttered—'very extraordinary! Really quite unusual—in fact, odd!' 'Go on looking,' said the fairy. I looked once more, and this time I noticed other things. First, most of the faces were much uglier than they had any right to be, but here and there I saw one that was nice to look at. 'Please explain this,' I asked the fairy; and he did.

"'This boy,' said the fairy, 'makes faces.' 'Not the only one,' I broke in. 'I know girls who would be quite pretty if they didn't——' The fairy did not seem to hear, for he was saying: 'Every face he makes is photographed at once and hung up on the wall inside him.' 'What?' I asked—'all of them?' 'Yes,' was the answer. 'You see that fierce-looking one? That's the face he always makes when he quarrels. Then the one just above it is the face he makes at his teacher when his back is turned. The picture near the corner is the face he makes when he can't have his own way. It is really very nasty.' 'Are there no nice ones?' I asked. 'A few,' came the reply. Look along the line until you see one that smiles. That's the face he makes when the kind of pudding he likes is brought on to the table. The third away from that shows how fine he looked when he was sorry that Carlo hurt his paw. Just above is a picture of him when he looks at his mother and feels, but doesn't say, how much he loves her. There are other nice ones, but more of them than I like are ugly, and show temper and sulks, and mean: "Don't like it at all!" and "Shan't do it if I can help it!"' I looked as he bade me, and the faces were there just as he said. While I was looking, another one came

on the wall, and the fairy said: 'That's the face he pulled when he didn't want to come to us.' Just then I woke up, and jumped out of bed and ran to the looking-glass to see what my face was like. I am glad to say I was smiling like I am now."

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The old man looked round and beamed, and the children said: "Is that all?" "Not quite," he said. "That dream was kind of true." "What!" exclaimed the boys and girls. "Yes," went on their friend, "every face you make means a mark inside you. Children cannot look cross without something inside them turning ugly. They cannot look nice and bright and good-tempered and kind without being better inside for it. If you were grown-up and could understand, I should say: 'As you look, so you become.'" "Please," broke in Janie, looking very serious, "no tales this time. Tell us how we can make our faces bright." "Well," said the old man, "you run home and get your Bibles, and read in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, from verse twenty-eight to the end. I think you will understand that those who pray to God, and who feel He is near them, have beautiful faces and bright looks so long as they are trying to do what He wishes."

THE SLUM GIRL'S HOLIDAY

Not so very long ago there was a little girl who lived in a court. It was not the kind of court in which kings dwell, but it was the other sort, with lots of dirty houses and poor children playing hop-scotch or dancing round a piano organ. This little girl had very few chances for play, because her father was dead, and her mother was so very poor that nearly all the time she was out of school she had to work very hard to help get money to buy bread and clothes. Her mother was a maker of artificial flowers, and this little girl, with quick, clever fingers, used to manufacture roses and lilies and tulips all out of different-coloured paper. Then, when they had made a lot, her mother used to take them to a man who bought such things, and he gave her money in exchange.

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Learning lessons during school-hours and working hard when you are not learning, is not healthy for children; and the poor, wee lassie began to look very ill, and got whiter and whiter every day. Her

mother was very sorry, and would have liked to have done something for her; but she was so very poor that nothing seemed possible. One day, however, a kind gentleman, who used to speak in a mission-hall not far away from the court, saw the little whitefaced girl, and made her eyes dance with joy by what he proposed. Kind friends had given him some money to send poor boys and girls into the country for a holiday, and he went and asked her mother if the little flower-worker might go away for a change. The mother was very pleased, and said that they would all work harder, so as to make up for the loss of her help while she was away. It did not take long to pack the little girl's luggage, because there was not much to pack; and one fine morning she stood on the railway platform, with a red handkerchief round her neck and a little bundle in her hand, so excited that she hardly knew what she was doing.

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When she got into the country, the kind people with whom she was staying had a wonderful garden. It was better even than the great city parks, to which the little girl had walked a long way once or twice when there was no work to be done at home;

and she walked to and fro along the path and she ran across the lawn with a great gladness in her heart. By-and-by she turned to the lady who was with her and said: "I wonder if I might touch the flowers?" And the lady answered: "Yes, dear; and afterwards, if you like, we will pick some for you to have." The little girl quickly took advantage of the permission, and stepped all round the flower-beds, running her little finger-tips over the blossoms; and, last of all, she took two roses, and looked at them ever so carefully, and fondled them gently in her hands. Then she was so quiet for a minute or two that the lady asked her what she was thinking about. "Oh," she said, "I was thinking what good work God does put into His flowers. We could not afford to do it for the money we are paid for the ones we make!"

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Do little readers understand why the lady felt inclined to cry? Can you help feeling sorry for a poor little girl who had lived so strange a life that she was able to speak in this way? It was very fine of her to think that God really does make all the beautiful flowers so well that He deserves to be praised for His work. Whenever you are in the

garden or in the fields, never forget the wonderful skill of the God who loves you. And sometimes you should thank Him because He sends His flowers everywhere, so that the world may be beautiful for boys and girls. There is one very good way to make God quite sure that you do want to praise Him. Many girls and boys have every year a magnificent holiday in the country or at the seaside. What about the poor boys and the poor girls whose fathers and mothers cannot afford to send them for a change? If you have a holiday do you not think that you might spare part of your pocket-money, and ask mother whether she could not send it to some kind people who arrange for poor children to have little holidays in the green fields and by the seashore? If you do this, mother can easily get to know someone who will make good use of your pennies, and you will enjoy your next holiday ever so much more because you have helped some other lad or lassie to a day in the country or a week at the seaside. Jesus Christ was very fond of flowers, and fields, and hills, and broad waters that sparkle in the sunlight; and He feels all His old pleasures again when boys and girls are glad near woods and sea; and He has even a deeper gladness when some of His young brothers

and sisters, who are better off than others, deny themselves and make it possible for poor children to get away from the stifling courts and the hot city streets and to have a few days in a beautiful place, where no one orders them to keep off the grass, and where they can race and shout and dig and play to their heart's content.

A BUD FOR THE MASTER

Poetry is not so dry as it often seems. For sometimes poems have in them stories that are worth telling again to girls and boys. Part of this tale was first written in a poem, and then something was added so as to make it a parable for children.

One morning all the flowers that had been brought up to heaven were heaped high on a golden table, so that they might be arranged in bowls and vases. The flowers in heaven, I have been told, are really the prayers of the men and women and children on earth. They think of the great Father in heaven who loves them, and they offer up either petition or thanks, and at once there is a fresh flower on the golden table. On this morning there were some wonderful blossoms. There was a little white daisy, that meant that a girl had asked Jesus Christ to help her to be good. There was a bunch of sea-pinks, which meant that a poor old mother had been praying for her son who was a sailor on the ocean. There was a flaming peony, that meant that a woman who had

been wicked was determined to follow Christ, and had told Him so. There was a beautiful white lily, which was the prayer of a boy who wished to be kept pure at school; and there was a bunch of fragrant violets, which were the prayers of a little girl who was afraid someone besides God would overhear her when she asked to be shown how to conquer a bad temper. There were other blossoms as well; and they lay on the golden table, in front of which stood the Angel of the Flowers with a little angel, who was helping and asking questions and learning things.

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As they worked and sorted the blossoms, it was the duty of the little angel to take the flowers that were ready and to put them in their right places. A great vase of white lilies and a little glass of buttercups were both put on the steps of the Throne; and nearly all the red roses were sent to the entrance-hall of the Palace. The little angel asked why so many were placed there, and he became both sad and glad when he was told the reason. For the Angel of the Flowers answered his question in these words: "Dear one, there is a little girl who is coming to heaven to-day. She

has been ill for a very long time; and because the Father loves her so much, and because it will be better for her to be here with us, He has sent the gentle Angel of Death to bring her nearer to Him. When on earth, the little girl lived in a cottage which had red roses all over the porch. The great God wishes her to feel at home as soon as she comes to us, and so we are to fill the entrance-hall with all the roses we can get into it." The little angel understood, and was quiet for a time, thinking how much the great Father must love all children when He thought of one of them like this.

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Whilst he was still thinking, he noticed something that made his thoughts turn another way. There on the great golden table, away from the other flowers, in a space all by itself, was just a single little rosebud. He looked at it and remembered that it had been there for quite a long time, for as soon as they began to sort the flowers the older angel had taken it and put it where it was still. More than once the little angel thought that he would be told to carry it somewhere; but he received no commands about the little rosebud.

This puzzled him so much that at last he spoke and said: "What is to be done with that little bud?" "That," said the Angel of the Flowers, "I have put aside, so that the Master may wear it." "What!" answered the little angel, "that rosebud for the Master! Why, I should like Him to have something very different — something bigger and something better. Don't let us give Him such a little rosebud." "Hush, dear one," came the gracious response of the older angel; "the Master must wear the rosebud, for it is the first prayer of a little child."

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Let the boys and girls who have read this parable learn from it that God is always willing to listen to the prayers of the children. He likes to hear grown-up people pray; but if all the grown-up people in the world prayed at once, and if a little child offered up a petition at the same time, He would hear the prayer of the little one as well as the prayers of the grown-up people. Jesus Christ loved to talk with children and to have them talk with Him when He was upon earth; and the great Father in heaven knows every girl and boy, and He loves all the children in the world. That is

why, when you have done wrong and want to say you are sorry, or when you wish to be helped to be better, if you will pray, God will always hear your prayer. When you pray, you must always remember that you really are speaking right to God; and the Master, who is Jesus Christ, wants you to know that nothing pleases Him more than the prayer of a little child.

THE HALF-FILLED BASKET

The children who like the parable before this, about the Angel of the Flowers and the little angel will, perhaps, be glad to read another tale that has been told about them. The earlier parable teaches us that the flowers in heaven are the prayers which grown-up people and boys and girls send up to the great God Who loves them. The little angel helps the older Angel of the Flowers; and, since he is the younger, it is part of his work to stand just outside the door at the time when the two great shining Angels of Prayer come up from the world below with the prayers of every day. The name of one of these Angels of Prayer is the Angel of Asking, and the other is called the Angel of Thanksgiving. The little angel receives their flowers from outside the entrance-hall, and then he carries them in baskets to the great golden table, on which he empties the blossoms.

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The little angel is always noticing and thinking and asking questions. One day he was very busy

for a long time, and he took at least seven baskets of wonderful flowers from one of the Angels of Prayer alone; then he asked, "Is that all?" and the answer came, "Yes." He carried his blooms to the great golden table, and then he returned to the other Angel of Prayer and said, "Now, please, let me have the flowers that you have brought," and held out his baskets. But he only got enough to fill one of them half full. This time he asked in amazement, "Is that all?" And he got a sad reply. "They are all that I have, little one." And, wondering much, he came back with the half-filled basket to the table.

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He emptied out his few blossoms, and then he looked at the Angel of Flowers and said: "Those are all I had from the second Angel of Prayer, and I am very sorry that there are not more, and I do not understand." "What don't you understand, dear one?" asked the older Angel of the Flowers. "I do not understand," came the answer, "how it is that from one of the Angels of Prayer I got seven baskets of flowers this morning, and the other one could only give me half a basketful. I asked him if that was all, and he looked so sorry when he

"BUT HE GOT ONLY ENOUGH TO FILL ONE BASKET."

answered, that I did not like to ask him to explain; and so I do not understand." "Child," said the Angel of the Flowers, "bethink you of the two names of the Angels of Prayer, and remember just what each has to do." "I remember," answered the little angel; "there is one of them that is called the Angel of Asking, and the other is the Angel of Thanksgiving. The Angel of Asking brings to heaven the flowers that are the prayers of people who want something from God; the Angel of Thanksgiving brings us the blossoms that are the prayers of men and women and boys and girls who wish to thank God for what He has given them; but I do not see how that explains it." "Ah, child!" said the Angel of the Flowers, "do you not understand that the Angel of Asking always brings us far more prayers than the Angel of Thanksgiving? For the people on earth are always far more ready to ask for something more than to thank Him for all the good things that He has given them." "How strange!" said the little angel. "I wonder whether the children on earth are just the same?" The Angel of the Flowers smiled when the little people were mentioned, and into his eyes there came the light of great love; but for all that, he said in reply, "If you could hear the prayers of the boys

and girls, you would find that they often forget to say 'Thank you,' but they never forget to ask God for something fresh."

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Of course, this is only a parable, and, like the one before it, it is not really a true story. But ought it not to make boys and girls think of things that are true? We are quite right to pray to God and ask Him for what we want; and the good Father in heaven will always listen, and will give us what is good for us. Sometimes He does not answer even the prayers of children, because it would not be good for them if He did so. Do you remember how one day your little brother wanted the carving-knife, and mother would not give it to him, because she loved the baby too much to let him have anything that he might hurt himself with? It is something like that with God. There are lots of our prayers that He does not answer, because He loves us too much to give us what would harm us. But He does answer, and all that it is best for us to have comes to boys and girls when they really pray. When the good things come, how many children say "Thank you" to their Father in heaven? You know, of course, that it is not at all

nice to forget to say "Thank you" for things that are given you by mother, or nurse, or by anyone else who is kind to you; and surely it cannot be right to treat God any worse than we should treat them. Yet very often we make the great heart of our heavenly Father sad because we fail to thank Him and to tell Him how grateful we are. Did you ever thank God because your parents love you? and especially did you ever thank Him because Jesus Christ cares for you? Do you ever thank God when you have had a happy day, with lots of kindness and play and pleasantness all the time? And when you have learnt a really hard lesson, do you thank God for helping you to understand it? Let the boys and girls who read this put an extra word of thanks in their prayers to-night, and they have no idea how glad they will make their Father in heaven.

CONCERNING A TOAD

THERE was once a boy named Huggins. What the other fellows at school called him, I do not know, but that was his real name. Though Huggins was a boy, sometimes he shed tears, and one day he was out in a road crying. Some boys cry when they are kicked, and some cry when they cannot kick the other chap; but Huggins was crying about something else. He was home for his holidays, and while he was playing in a field he had found a toad. It is not very easy to love toads, but Huggins took this one home and fed it, and got quite fond of it. I have not heard whether he wanted to have it in bed with him to sleep, but if he did it is quite certain his mother would not allow it. Still, he had got very much attached to his pet, and he was crying in the road because when he went back to school he would not be allowed to take the toad with him, and he was afraid that during term-time nobody would look after it, and so he would lose his friend.

* * * *

While Huggins was crying, someone who had never heard either of him or of his toad was coming down the road. He was the great Duke of Wellington, who had beaten Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo. Because he had fought so well, England had given him a great park and a big house in which to live, and this house was not far away from where Huggins was weeping over his toad. As the duke was walking past he caught sight of Huggins; and though he was such a brave, strong man, he could never bear to see anybody cry, so he stopped and asked what was the matter. Huggins did not know to whom he was speaking, and he did not salute or anything; he just choked down his sobs and told the duke the sad story of how he was soon to be parted from his friend, who crawled like a racehorse, and who had eyes that shone like fire. The toad said nothing, but lay in Huggins' pocket, damp and comfortable, because it did not understand how soon it would have to part from its little master. When the duke heard the tale he looked quite troubled, and, after a talk, he put his hand on Huggins' shoulder and said, "Never mind, my lad; nobody shall hurt that toad while you are away. The day before you go to school you bring it up to

my house, and we will look after it for you until the holidays come again."

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Huggins dried his tears and said, "Thank you very much, sir," and went away happy. While they were packing his box at home he walked up the broad drive to the house of the Duke of Wellington and rang the bell. A very solemn butler opened the door, and Huggins went in and handed over the toad to the duke. They then said, "Good-bye," and the boy was back at school the next day. But more than once during the term he received a letter with a crest on the envelope, and when he opened it, it read: "Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Master Huggins, and begs to inform him that his toad is quite well." At the beginning of the next holidays Huggins went once more to the duke's house and received his pet. The people who told me this story did not mention whether he kissed it; but, anyhow, he found that it had been well looked after, and that the great general had kept his promise.

* * * *

You cannot help smiling at Huggins, but do you not think he was a fine fellow to be so good to his

toad? And do you not feel quite certain that it was just splendid of the man who won the battle of Waterloo to look after the toad while his little friend was away at school? Yet if some girls only see a toad passing across the road they say, "Nasty, ugly thing!" and they run away; and if some boys notice one, they call out, "Look at that ugly beast! Let's get some stones and shy at him." Would it not be much better to be kind, not only to toads, but to every other sort of animal? It is, of course, rare sport for rough boys to hunt a lame dog; but what about the feelings of the poor animal that is hunted? It is all very well for certain small girls to nip the cat's tail; but if she liked it she would not try and scratch. The best children are those who are kind, not only to human beings, but to every animal they know. Sometimes boys and girls have holidays, and are taken by their parents to the seaside or the country. What happens to the cat while you are away? Cruel people often give no thought to it at all; and while their boys and girls are digging in the sand, or running about the fields, poor pussy is prowling about back-gardens in search of something to eat, and every day she gets thinner and thinner. When the family returns, the cat comes home and mews with delight

to meet them all again, for she is very ready to forgive and forget; and the children come round pussy and count her ribs, and say to one another, "Dear me! she was quite fat when we went away." How would some children like it if, when the others went off for their holidays, they were left at home without money and without food, and had to beg or steal the bread that kept them alive until their parents returned? Of course no one would treat a child so cruelly, and it is not fair that people should behave in that way even to a cat. So if at holiday-time you cannot take pussy with you to the seashore or the woods, be sure and ask mother to get some kind person to look after her while you are away.

"PLEASE!"

Any boy or girl who was asked to say something about the great Duke of Wellington would at once answer, "Battle of Waterloo." For everyone knows that the Duke was the general who commanded the forces when the enemies of England were defeated. You might expect that a strong man and a great soldier would never have troubled to be polite, and it would not surprise you if you were told that the Duke of Wellington was gruff and off-hand to all who were less important than himself. But the great general was very different from this, and the story below shows how courteously he behaved.

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Whether men are noble or peasant the time comes when they have to die. To die is to go to a place where you are nearer to God; and when He is ready for us He sends and tells us to come. The great Father had made the Duke of Wellington understand that soon he must leave this earth, and

the nobleman was lying in bed waiting for the last summons. In the room were some people who loved him; and among them was a servant who moved about as quietly as possible and did all that could be done to ease the dying man. Finding out that the duke was thirsty, the servant came near his bed and asked, "Would your Grace like some tea?" The great duke turned his eyes upon his questioner and murmured gently, "Yes, if you please." And these were the last words he spoke in this world, for not long after, God, his great Commander, called him and, like the obedient soldier that he was, he went.

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If the man who beat Napoleon took the trouble to say "Please," ought not boys and girls to be very careful about it? Many children never seem to be at all polite to servants, and they order them about roughly, and behave very badly to them, never asking them for anything politely, and never saying "Thank you." This is naughty, and always displeases Jesus Christ. Some boys and girls hardly ever say "Please," except when mother has a big piece of cake in her hand, and holds it back until they ask for it nicely. Then they

mumble "Please" quickly, and grab. But good children, whenever they ask for anything at meals, or when they want a book passed them in school, or when they wish a servant to give them anything, always speak nicely and say, "If you please." What is it that you do? Do you make Jesus Christ glad by being polite to everyone, or do you behave like rude children who know better, but who will not take the trouble to be courteous?

A NEW YEAR DREAM

He was only six, and he slept in a bedroom all by himself; and on New Year's morning mother had called him and lit his candle and wished him a Happy New Year. But he was so sleepy that he made a mistake and answered: "Merry Christmas, mother, dear," and then turned over again. Father once told him that the great Duke of Wellington used to say: "Only one more turn when you are called in the morning, and that must be the *turn out!*" But he never could remember before breakfast, and soon he was dozing again. And while he was sleeping, he dreamed such a strange dream.

* * * *

Out of the Land of Nowhere came a Fearsome Creature and sat on his chest! It was just like those amazing beings that come when you dream after too much supper, only it was so ugly that he said: "Well, I never!" "Be quiet," said the Fearsome Creature, "and see how pretty I am!" And he looked, and saw a creature with long ears

like a donkey, and an elastic waistcoat, and a mouth that slanted, and a long tail that was tied in a knot. It really was very strange; and yet somehow he wasn't afraid, but spoke up and asked—

"Do you really think you are pretty?"

"Yes," snapped back the Fearsome Creature. "My conceit tells me I am."

"Dear me!" said the boy. "And why is your tail tied in a knot?"

"So as to remind me to be nasty to everybody. Sometimes I forget."

"What makes your mouth crooked? And why have you got such big ears?"

"My lips went that nice shape through telling lies; and I have big ears so as to hear all the unkind things boys and girls say about each other. When I hear them, I chortle and laugh. Would you like to see how I chortle?"

"No, thank you," came the answer. "Tell me why you have a waistcoat made of elastic."

"That is my party waistcoat. It stretches."

"How greedy!" said the boy. "What is your name?"

"Don't know yet," he grunted in reply. "Every first of January I take the name of the boy or girl

that is most like me. I hope next year I shall have yours."

And the Fearsome Creature made a particularly ugly face and went.

* * * *

The boy looked, and over where the Fearsome Creature had been, stood an Angel with a book. He looked so kind that the boy asked him his name at once.

"I am the Angel of the Children," he answered, "and this is my Book for boys and girls. Shall I read out of it?"

"Please," he said.

The angel turned over the pages and read a little here and there. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Pride do I hate. Be kind one to another. A liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue."

"Excuse me stopping you," said the boy, "but the Fearsome Creature was proud and nasty and told lies. He wants me to be like him, but I can't if your Book says all that. Is there anything in it about waistcoats?"

The angel smiled. "Well, little man," he replied, "I know what you mean, and there is

something in my book about greedy dogs that never have enough."

"Oh, dear!" broke in the boy. "I try hard not to be greedy. If I had a book like yours, it might help."

"Why, little man," answered the angel, "my Book for Boys and Girls is just the Bible."

The boy thought a little and then he said: "Got a little boy of your own?"

"Well," answered the angel, "I love all children because Jesus Christ cares for them. But each New Year's Day I look at the boy or girl who obeys God most, and I say: 'If I had a little child of my own, I should like that one.' Then I give the child a special name. Perhaps next year you'll have that name."

And the Angel of the Children smiled and went.

LEARNING LESSONS

THERE is a little hotel in a village in Switzerland where grown-up people, and sometimes children, go to stay. When they are there they have to be fed and their beds have to be made, and there are servants who do all they can to make them comfortable. One of these servants is a young Swiss woman who has to look after a number of bedrooms, and when people ring their bells she goes to see what they want. Often when they are English she cannot understand at once what they require, for she has only been brought up to speak German and French, and sometimes the visitors from Great Britain can only speak their own language. But she does her best, and when nobody wants her she sits by a table in the passage so as to be near when she is called. There she folds towels and does all sorts of things till she has nothing else to do either for her employers or the visitors. Then, I dare say, the boys and girls who read this expect she sits idle or goes to sleep on her chair. But she does neither;

and this is the story of how she spends her spare time.

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One winter a lady who often passed her noticed that when the young Swiss woman had nothing else to do she was always writing. She had ink and paper, and the lady thought she was writing letters, and used to wonder how much money it cost her in stamps. But a closer glance showed that the maid had a book in front of her, and seemed to be copying out of it. When she had copied for a little while, she would look very serious and cross words out and write over the top. This so puzzled the lady that one evening she asked her what she was doing, and what do you think it was? She was learning English; and she had got a grammar and exercise book, and was translating from one of her own languages into English and back again. She knew that if she could master English she would be a much more useful servant, and so she was learning it. The lady was very pleased with her and praised her, and I think she quite deserved any kind things that were said to her.

* * * *

Of course, the children who read this will think it is a very fine thing for a Swiss servant-girl to be working hard to improve herself; but what about your own lessons? You have been sent to school because Jesus Christ wants all boys and girls to grow up just the best men and women it will be possible for them to be. The more you learn, the better chance you will have of being all you ought to become. Yet a boy who is reading this, all last term used to idle during "preparation." Another lad used to pretend to himself he had learned his home lessons, and before he really knew them he often shut his books and ran out to the street to play. A girl I know is too lazy to practise her chromatic scales properly, and her school friend is so careless that she writes all her French exercises without any accents. Quite a big lad, who was in the first football team, had learnt his Latin so badly that he tried to decline *ambo* in the singular, and was heard to ask what part of the verb *igitur* might be. All these are beaten out-and-out by the Swiss servant-girl you have read about. Surely, if she takes so much trouble to learn, you might be more careful about your lessons.

THE PEACEMAKER

Boys and girls always know when a General Election is going on. For they see flags and bills and hear a lot of noise, and notice many motor cars throbbing around. Perhaps also they know to which side they belong, and wear colours and shout for the best man. In some places dogs as well as children take part in elections; and one election time there came up a street two small doggies. It was plain that each was feeling rather perky, and it was easy to see why. One was wearing Conservative colours, and the other was decorated with ribbons that were meant to show he was an out-and-out Liberal. Fine colours please dogs as much as they please children; and each doggie was trotting proudly along as much as to say, "Wow,wow; I'm on the right side, and let other dogs look out!" Soon they met, and first both of them lifted up little black noses and pretended to sniff. This was rude, and could only lead to one thing. The Conservative doggie began to growl. I am not sure, but I think he was heard to say,

"Prrr-er-ef-erence! Wow, wow!" The Liberal was just as bad, and what he said was something like "Frrree Trade! Yap, yap!" Then they began to fight, and bit and scratched and howled and yowled, just like some children who now and then behave as if they did not know any better than dogs. But before they could hurt each other a strange thing happened. A big dog came lop-petty-lop down the street. He was a fine-looking fellow. He wore no colours; and it was plain that he was thinking of something other than elections and small dogs. But he heard the noise and stopped a moment. Then he went to the two little fighters and thrust a big head right in between them. It was for all the world as if he were saying, "Now then; no fighting here!" And each small dog gave one look at him and then ran off as fast as four legs could carry a quarrelsome little body.

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Every good tale has a moral, and there are four tales in this story. That is not the way to spell all of them, but each dog had a tail, and that makes three. And the story about them is another tale, and that makes four. Now two morals for four tales is quite fair, so here goes. First, have any

little readers been quarrelling with another child who wore different colours on election day? And have any of them been fighting? Never fight if you can anyhow help it without being a coward, and never quarrel because the other lad or lass will not think as you do. Have plenty of pluck and always show your colours. Try and show your side is right by being a little gentleman or a little lady, but always remember the other child has a perfect right to think differently from you at home and in the playground and in the street. Children who cannot differ without fighting or squabbling are just like the two little dogs who had to be parted by the big one. That is the first moral. This is the second. Think of the big dog and always be a peacemaker when you can. Try and stop other boys and girls fighting, and try and get them to make up their quarrels. You cannot do this without being peaceful yourself, for other children will do as you do much more than they will do as you ask them. So be peaceable and be a peacemaker. Who knows what Jesus Christ said about peacemakers? Whose children are they? Get the Bible and turn up St. Matthew's Gospel, chapter five, verse nine, and you will see. Then learn the verse and say it to mother.

A BIRMINGHAM PICTURE

A long time ago Roman Catholics used to think they did God service by persecuting people who did not think of Jesus Christ and religion as they did. The people whom they persecuted were called Protest-ants, because they protested against Roman Catholicism; and in the Birmingham Art Gallery there is a picture which helps those who see it to understand how cruelly one Protestant girl was treated. Her name was Jeannette, and she used to live at the village of Santhoven, in Belgium. The picture shows her walking down the steps of a church at Malines. She is clad in a flowing gown of white, and her long hair, that hangs loosely behind her, makes a frame for a beautiful blanched face that is strong with pain and determination. Following her are white-robed monks; by her side is a stern-faced monk, who is talking to her; in front of her struts a coarse-faced gaoler clad in scarlet, and before him walk some high officials at the rear of a band of soldiers. But the worst figure in the procession is a hideous dwarf who carries a pick.

With it he is going soon to help dig a grave, and it says in an old book kept in the cathedral at Ghent that her persecutors buried Jeannette alive. At each side of the picture the artist has painted people who, except one man that shakes his fist, seem sorry for the poor girl; but no one was able to prevent cruel hands heaping earth on her till she died.

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It is very terrible to think that for any reason a poor girl was treated like that; and the story about her is not half so nice as others I could tell. But there are two lessons to be learnt from the picture. The girl was a Protestant, and because she would not do anything but what she thought was right, cruel people put her to death; and all the time she might have saved herself by being a coward and pretending to believe what she thought was false. Do you know that you are a Protestant? You are; and it is a grand thing that you and the brave girl have the same name. It ought to make you out and out proud to think that she was a Protestant, and you are one as well. For, besides her, numbers of other Protestants chose to be killed rather than be forced by cruel folk to be anything or do anything they thought would displease Christ. Some

people make fun of Protestants, and others say cruel things about them. Never you mind; always be proud that you are a Protestant. And when you grow up be a strong Protestant, who firmly believes the truth, and is never nasty to others who believe differently. That is one lesson. This is the second. There are different kinds of Protestant children, and you must ask God to help you to be the best kind. Those who belong to the best kind are like the girl in the picture, and have pluck to always do what is right. Are you always brave enough for this? I once knew a boy who told a lie because he was afraid other lads would laugh at him if he spoke the truth; and a girl away at school used to say her prayers in bed because another girl made fun of her for kneeling on the floor before the lights were out. Another child I know twice joined in something wicked because he did not dare go against the rest. I wonder what the girl in the picture would have said about these three? What must Jesus Christ think of them? What does He think of you? Never be a little coward who does wrong for fear of others. Remember how brave Jesus was, and call to mind the girl in the picture, and be brave and out and out for Christ and right.

THE COVENANTERS

Some hundreds of years ago many of the people of Scotland were religiously what they are now. They called themselves Presbyterians, because of the way in which it seemed right to them to think of God and to worship Him. Jesus Christ is best pleased when each man who has prayed and thought does as God has allowed him to think is right; and no one ought to try and force other folk into believing what Jesus Christ has not taught them, especially if He has already taught them something quite different. But at the time of which you are reading there were people in England who were connected with what was called the Church of England, and they decided to try and make people believe as they did. This was not easy, for even though they put them in prison, and burnt them, obstinate men and women still thought of God and worshipped Him as He had helped them to hold was right; and many of the Presbyterians bound themselves by a covenant to live, and, if necessary, to fight and die for what they held true. A few of

the Church of England folk admired them and partly sided with the Covenanters, as they were called; but other members of the English Church sent soldiers out to capture or shoot the brave people who would give in to no one except Jesus Christ. When the soldiers came to look for them, some of the Covenanters had to take their wives and their little children and fly to the great hills. There they suffered a great deal, for often it was cold and snowed; but if only they could find a cave to hide in, they thanked God for taking care of them. This tale is about some Covenanters who were hiding in a cave.

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These brave poor people sometimes read their Bibles in the cave by the light of a torch; and sometimes they stole out to worship God together in some hollow of the hills. Now and then a friend who was in their secrets would come cautiously and bring them some oatmeal, that they might not starve; and they would take it and prepare it, and thank God for His goodness to them, and eat it. But all the people who came near the cave were not friendly. If soldiers found them out, all had to run, and generally several were shot and never seen

"SOMETIMES READ THEIR BIBLES IN THE CAVE BY THE LIGHT OF A TORCH."

again. And sometimes a visitor would pretend to be a friend when he was really a spy who had come to find out all about the Covenanters and then betray them. One day a spy came to the very cave of which you are reading; and they believed he was a friend and made him welcome. How do you think they found the bad man out? When meal-time came, they offered to share with him what little they had. He thanked them, and they divided him his portion with the rest. He took it and began to eat at once without saying "grace;" and because he did not ask a blessing on his food, they knew he was not one of themselves. At once strong men laid hands on him and captured him and bound him, and told him to his face how wicked a man he was.

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Boys and girls who read tales have often read about the finding out of a spy; but they rarely read of one who was found out in that way. Of course he deserved all he got; and no one is worse than sneaks and spies. Judas was a spy, and you remember what a bad man Jesus thought him. Most children who read this would rather be Covenanters than spies. You are right, for the Covenanters were fine people. Do you know they

did something for you? They battled against the men who wanted to make them think of God and worship Him in ways they did not believe were right; and so they helped to make it possible for grown-up folk and children to worship outside the Church of England. It would seem nonsense to you for anyone to try to stop you going to your own church, or learning in a chapel Sunday-school. But at one time many people were not willing for anyone to go to your kind of church, and those who went there had to fight them before they would stop trying to prevent them. You ought, therefore, to bless God for Covenanters and all other brave men who fought battles for you before even grandfather was born. Also, you ought to imitate the Covenanters. Love truth, and God will love you. Be brave for the right, and Jesus Christ will help you. Ask mother for a piece of paper, and on it write: "Truth and pluck for the Covenanters and for *William James*"—or whatever your full name is. Then show it to father and ask him if you have written it nicely. Further, children who are like Covenanters must do as Covenanters did. Never forget to say "grace," even when you are very hungry. "Grace" is your "Thank you!" to God for the way He looks after a child like you.

THE QUARREL

THERE were once two old monks who lived in a nice, dry, comfortable cave, and their names were Brother Hilarius and Brother Boniface. Most of their time they spent in praising God, and, for the rest, they for the most part smiled all the summer and laughed all the winter. They loved Christ, and they loved each other, and such love always makes for happiness. But one day Brother Hilarius got tired of being good. Like certain boys and girls when they also have behaved for a long time, he wanted a change. So he remarked to Brother Boniface, "I say, let's be naughty." Brother Boniface looked serious, for he did not half like the idea, but at last he consented, and asked, "How can we manage it?" "Well," said the other monk, "let us have a quarrel. There is nothing worse than a real row." "Yes," went on Brother Boniface, "but what can we quarrel about?" "Well," came the answer, "I can't pull your hair, for you haven't got any. And I can't steal your food, for you always want me to

eat yours as well as my own. But I have it! You see that white stone out there? You say it's yours, and I'll say it's mine, and so we'll get up a squabble." "All right," said the other monk, "only you must begin, and perhaps," he added with a smile, "it'll come to a fight." And he clenched his fist behind his back, for when Brother Boniface was a boy at school there had on one occasion been a fight, and—— But that is telling.

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Brother Hilarius scowled, and looked ugly and black, and Brother Boniface did the same, and neither of them seemed the least like the good kind man he really was. Then Brother Hilarius pointed to a large white stone and said, gruffly, "Understand that stone is mine, and if I catch you sitting on it, or using it for a pillow, I shall crack your bald pate with it." Such fierceness made Brother Boniface jump, and he said with amazement, "I beg your pardon, my dear brother." "Don't call me 'dear,'" was the rough reply. "Behave respectfully to your betters. Understand that white stone is mine. Do you deny it?" At this Brother Boniface could hardly breathe, but he managed to stammer out, "Your stone, is it?"

"Yes," shouted the other monk, "my stone, and, mind, it belongs to me, and I'm going to have it." "Well," faltered Brother Boniface, "of course, it is yours, my dear friend. And if you'll wait a minute I'll find you another, and you can have two." Then they both burst out laughing, and Hilarius said, "I suppose we must give it up. It takes two to make a quarrel, and you are such an amiable old rascal that you won't disagree." And they were good and happy ever afterwards.

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Who knows the moral to this tale? If you were never to quarrel could the other child ever quarrel with you? And which pleases Jesus Christ the more, the nasty, disagreeable, selfish boy or girl, or the lad or lass who is always good-tempered and amiable? I wonder what Brother Boniface would say?

THE DYING SOLDIER

NEARLY all boys and girls have heard of the Crimean war, and they know about the charge of Balaclava, when

"Into the valley of death rode the six hundred."

But war is not all glory and fine charges and magnificent victories. There is always more than one hospital for every battlefield; and the poor men who have been wounded in the fight have to be carried into a tent, or some rough building, where they lie on beds of pain until they either get better or die. During the Crimean war, in one of these hospitals there were a number of wounded soldiers, and in addition to the nurses there was a minister of Christ who was trying to help them. He moved from bed to bed, telling the sufferers how much God loved them, and how those who thought they were dying were not going to die at all, because dying is not really being buried in some place underground; it is more like going to another room upstairs to work and play. When the minister

talked kindly, nearly everybody was very glad to listen; but there was one soldier who, the moment the servant of Christ came near where he was lying, always turned his head to the wall. This was not at all polite, and the finest people are those who are just as polite when they are ill as they are when they are well. The wounded soldier was getting weaker every day, and the doctors and nurses whispered to one another that he could not last long. This made the minister more anxious than ever to tell him about the love of God, and so he made another attempt to speak with him.

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By this time the poor soldier was so ill that he had not strength enough to turn away his head; and though his eyes looked as if he were cross at being approached, the minister was so sorry for him that he felt bound to speak. "Tell me," he said, "is there anything that I can do for you?" Soldiers who are dying often want someone to write a letter to their mother or to their boys and girls who are far away, and the minister thought that perhaps the poor sufferer might wish for something of the sort. But the patient only looked more angry than ever, and said: "Do you know to

whom you are speaking? I have been the worst man in our whole regiment, and I was always the first in every kind of wickedness." "I am sorry, my friend," came the answer of the servant of Christ, "to hear you speak like that. Wickedness is always wrong, but God is always ready to pardon. Look to the Cross, and you can know forgiveness." The sufferer hardly listened, but went on saying: "One day there came to our regiment a fresh recruit, a young country boy, who knew hardly anything about wickedness. I made up my mind to make that young man as bad as myself. I managed to do it; and during our last battle he was shot dead, fighting at my side, just as he was saying a terrible word he had learnt from me. Can you or anyone else alter my past and take that from out of my life?" The minister tried to explain to him that God, because of His mercy, is always willing to forget the sins of those who own up that they have done wrong. But the poor, wicked soldier refused to be comforted, and the minister had to go away, leaving him very sad indeed.

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This is not a very nice story, but the boys and girls who understand what it means can save

themselves from something that is far worse. All children influence one another; and to be bad helps to make other boys bad, while to be good helps to make other girls good. There are lots of times when the other fellow would not have lost his temper if you had not lost yours first; and the other girl would not have neglected her lessons and have been punished for inattention unless you had first neglected your book and whispered and kicked her under the desk, or pinched her arm when she was not looking. On the other hand, if children try hard to be cheerful even when it would be very easy to be bad-tempered, it helps everyone else to be sweet and wholesome; and if, after you go back to school this month, you really study hard during lesson-time, your example will help some other boy or girl to be really attentive. When you read this, some of you will want to know who is going to help *you*. Well, it sounds like a puzzle, but it really is not, when you are told that if you help others, they will help you to help yourself. Read that through twice and think hard until you understand it. Then, best of all, there is someone whose name is Jesus Christ. He is a great God, but He is the Brother of all girls and boys. If we look to Him, He is always the pattern by which we

can model ourselves; and there is something about Him that makes it possible for Him not only to set us an example, but to give us the power that enables us to follow Him. In a letter that the Apostle Peter wrote, he says that Christ left us an example that we should follow His steps. And Jesus Himself said: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Another thing that Christ said was: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"; and He is never so pleased as when a boy or girl is willing to be helped by Him to be good.

BUDDHA AND THE BEAST

A LONG time ago, before ever Jesus was born, there lived a great and good man whom we now call Buddha. Of course, no one was ever so good as Jesus Christ, and He was God as well as Man. But Buddha believed several things that Jesus Christ taught. He believed that no one ought to be selfish and that everybody ought to love everybody else. And what he believed he so acted up to that after he was dead people told lots of pretty stories about him. This was one. He was once walking a long way to do a deed of love to someone, and suddenly there barred his road a terrible monster. He was tall and a little bit like a man, but he was more like a beast. He was terribly ugly, and he made great roaring noises and danced round and waved a thick club in his big hands. When Buddha saw him I expect he wished that both of them had stayed at home. But he had not much time to think, for the hideous monster said to him, "Now I have got you; I will teach you that hate is more powerful than love." Also he called

names and said lots of other things that meant that when he had tormented him enough he was going to kill Buddha.

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If somebody met you like that I know you would be very frightened, and most boys and girls would be very angry indeed. They would hate their terrible enemy, and would say and do things that showed how they felt. But the legend says that Buddha did not behave at all like that. He looked straight at the beast, and he smiled—not a nasty smile, but a really kind one. Then he said, in a gentle voice, "Poor friend, even thee I love." This was wonderful, but something stranger came next. As soon as Buddha told him he loved him all the fierceness went away from the monster, and he began to look not half so ugly. Buddha said more kind words, and the beast commenced to get smaller. He grew smaller and smaller, until at last he was little indeed. Then he changed into a beautiful dove that spread white wings and flew all round the head of Buddha, cooing gently.

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What do you think of that tale? It may not be true, but it shows what a good man Buddha was

thought to be by the folk who first told it. Have you got an enemy? Is there a boy or girl anywhere who hates you, and is always trying to do you harm? Is there someone at school who is constantly doing you a bad turn? If so, how do you behave to them? You can, if you like, hate in return, and try and pay them out. This will often make them act to you worse than ever, and so you will both be angry together, and each will displease Christ, who said, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you." But there is another way, and it is worth trying. It is the way of Buddha, and a way that makes Christ glad. Try being kind to your enemy, and behaving decently to him. Do not let your enemies make you cross, but smile at them, and let them see you really care for them. Then very often they will grow ashamed of themselves, and some boys and girls who now are nasty to you will become your chums. Speak gently and act kindly when other children are angry and cruel, and do both in a way that shows you are not a coward but a real little man or a real little woman. That is the way to please Christ, and to make lots of friends.

THE DARK ROOM

Basil was eight, and he had climbed up the hill and passed through the white gate into Fairyland. The sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and the flowers were blooming; and Basil ran happily to and fro catching blue moths and large brown butterflies with red spots on their wings. Suddenly, as he was hurrying through the tall grass, he lifted his eyes to follow the flight of a bird he had startled, and before him he saw the most beautiful lady he had ever met. She was tall and stately. She was clad in a flowing gown of white; and there was a kind look in her eyes that showed children need never be afraid of her. Seeing Basil, she smiled, and, like the polite boy that he was, he lifted his hat. Then she smiled again and asked his name. He told her, and at once she said, "What a nice name you have! I am called Truth. I have been looking for you, for I want you to come to my palace." Basil hardly liked hearing this, for his mother and his teacher often had to talk to him about Truth, and meeting her so near made him

uncomfortable. But the lady in white held out her hand, and Basil felt he must take hold of it and walk where she wished.

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Talking gently by the way, they came to a broad, straight road, and next they saw the Palace of Truth set in a garden of white lilies. They passed up marble steps into a great hall lined with clear mirrors, and Basil was rather ashamed to notice that his face was not very clean and his hair was untidy. But before he had time to think very much about it they had gone the length of the hall and were walking down some steps at the end of it. "Where are we going?" asked Basil, for as they descended the light grew dim and it looked dark ahead. "We are going," said Truth, "to the dark room where I keep my phonographs." The mention of phonographs cheered Basil, for he had a talking machine at home, and when you set it going it sang songs and made jokes. But when they reached the room he did not like it at all, and he liked it less when Truth said to him, gently, "Do not be frightened, little one, I shall not leave you, but you have been brought here to learn a lesson you sorely need. This phonograph has your name on it, and

it has heard and kept all the naughty stories you have ever told. Listen! You are to hear some of them over again." Truth touched a spring, and above the whirr of mechanism Basil heard once more an untrue boast he had made just over an hour ago to another boy he met on his way up the mountain. This made him feel cross, for he always got angry when he knew he was in the wrong. Next came a fib he had told his teacher about his lessons. Then an angry voice spoke out something false he had said on the football field because he was so anxious to win. As he heard this his anger went, and he felt conscience-stricken and all strange inside. The phonograph went on, and when it began to utter again a lie he had told his mother, he tried to let go the hand of Truth and to run from the room. But she clasped his fingers tightly and said, "We will go together, for you and I must be friends, or it will be no use running away," and hand in hand they hurried up the steps into the sunlight.

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When they reached the Hall of Mirrors, Basil burst out crying and said: "Oh, that was horrible." "What was horrible?" asked Truth, as she ran

gentle fingers through his hair. "Why," he answered, "hearing those lies over again. They hurt, and it was cruel for me to have to listen." "Basil," said Truth, looking very solemn, "if it hurts you to hear them again, how much do you think they hurt God when He heard them come from your lips? You see, your Heavenly Father loves you, and because He cares for you, all you do wrong hurts Him." "I am very sorry," answered Basil in a sad voice; "I did not know it was so very wrong to tell stories. I will try and do better." "That's right, little man," said his friend Truth, "but be sure when you say your prayers you tell God how sorry you are, and ask Him to help you always to speak words that are true." "I will," spoke up Basil in firm tones that showed he was feeling better. "And," continued Truth, taking a book from a table, "here is a book that will help you if you read it. I have marked some places with a red pencil. Now, I know that you are a clever little reader. Take this book away with you, and sit down on the white gate for a rest and find the verses I have underlined." Basil thanked her and went away thinking a great deal. When he came to the white gate he climbed up and sat on the top bar and opened his book. The first words

he noticed underlined were not far from the end of it and read, "Speak every man truth with his neighbour." Then he turned further on and saw, "Lie not one to another." Next he found some pages much nearer the other end, and not far apart he read these words, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," "The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Last of all he saw this text and read it out aloud, "A righteous man hateth lying." Then he said to his Heavenly Father and to himself, "That is what I want to be when I grow up—a righteous man. If God will help me, no more lies for Basil."

FORGIVENESS

Once there was a certain small boy who had an auntie. He was not a very bad boy, and he was not a very good boy. He was just an ordinary boy, who sometimes was naughty and sometimes was not. Often his auntie would talk to him about being better; and because she was nice and smiled a great deal more than she scolded, he used to listen, and now and then he even liked hearing what she said. She told him about Jesus Christ, who loves all boys and girls, and she helped him to understand that when he was good, Jesus was glad, and when he did wrong, Christ was sorry. Also she told him about heaven and about good people going there after they died; and once the boy could not help crying when she read to him the story of how, when Jesus Christ was being crucified, a dying thief asked Him for forgiveness, and He said at once: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The small boy did not understand all that Auntie meant, but he learnt from her that if

boys and girls are good, they are sure to go to heaven when they leave this world.

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When he had thought of this, and when he remembered how every time he told a fib or lost his temper he grieved Jesus Christ, he used to try very hard to be just the best boy possible. But one day he was really very wicked. I forget just what he did, but I think he had done something wrong, and when he was rebuked he got very cross and said things and stamped about. Then he felt what he was doing and began to sob. Auntie came to him and lifted him on her knee and said to him: "Oh, little man, you should not be so naughty!" At this he cried more, and she said very quietly: "Does my little boy remember how one day in church the minister said that in heaven they have a great big book, and with a golden pencil they write down in the book all the good things and all the bad things that children do? And has he forgotten that we were told that if there were very, very many naughty things written down in our names, and if we were not sorry for them, we should grieve Jesus, who loves us so much?" "I remember," said the little boy,

choking down his sobs. "Well," said Auntie, "how does my little man like to think of all he did just now being written down by the hand of God?"

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The question made him so quiet that he even forgot to cry, and he sat on Auntie's knee just thinking hard and being ashamed of himself. He did not like to think of the book in which his sins were set down, and he could not bear to think of the God whom he had hurt by doing wrong. He knew that God was his Father in heaven, and that he ought to obey Him quite as readily as he did his other father on earth. A boy who could hurt his earthly father seemed to him a very bad boy indeed; and he wondered what children who grieve the heavenly Father really deserve. The very thought of it made his heart feel like a great lump of lead. But as he was thinking, he remembered something else he had heard about God being a God of Love, and forgiving children who are really sorry, and quite forgetting how naughty those children have been; and although the boy could not keep back a few tears, he tried to look as though he was not really crying, and he said, "Well but, Auntie,

hasn't God got any indiarubber on the end of His pencil?"

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Did you ever hear of anybody crying for joy? I expect Auntie smiled first, and then tears came into her eyes, because she was so glad that her little boy understood that God is willing to forgive us and will rub out all our sins from the book of His remembrance if we are really sorry for having done wrong. A good man who knew Jesus Christ very well indeed when He was on earth wrote in a verse you can find in your Bible: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You will find the words in the last book but four in the New Testament. Look them up and read them aloud, and then ask God to forgive you all that you have done wrong, and pray to Him to help you to be a better boy or a nobler girl. God is always waiting to forgive, and He is always hoping that children will ask His pardon.

BROKEN GLASS

The poor old woman was walking down the street, and every now and then she stooped and picked up something and put it in her apron. She did this so often that at last the suspicions of the policeman were roused, and he watched her. But even the eye of the constable did not make her stop, and she bent down again. This was too much for the gentleman in blue, and he went up to her and said gruffly, "Now, then, what are you doing?" "Never you mind," retorted the old woman. "I'm paid to mind," quoth the officer, "and I must see what's in your apron." "Here you are," said the aged dame, and she opened her apron to show. It was full of bits of broken glass, mostly pieces of bottles, and the policeman was surprised. "Ho, ho," he remarked, "going to put them in some mortar on the top of your garden wall, I suppose, mother." The old lady smiled, and her smile was better than her grammar, for she went on, "Not me; "I'm going to throw them away." "H'm," said the officer; "bit mad, aren't

you, mother?" "Not me," was the answer. "You know the boys and girls what plays here when they ain't at school?" The constable looked solemn, for he knew them, and they gave him a lot of trouble. "I do," he retorted briefly. "Well, bless your belt and buttons," said the old lady, "when it is hot they leaves their boots and stockings at home and plays in their bare feet. Understand?" The gentleman in blue shook his helmet. "Stoopid," said the old lady. "If I was your mother I'd larn you. If these bits of glass stays in the road some of them boys and girls might cut their little feet. So I picks them all up and throws them away again somewhere where they can't hurt anyone." "Well, I never," said the policeman. Then he noticed a crowd had come round. "Move on here," he called out from somewhere behind the third button of his tunic; and the crowd and the old lady moved on.

Was she not a cheeky old lady? and what grammar! But what a heart she had! Boys and girls who are well dressed do not half understand what kind souls most old women are. They may be ragged and some of them may not be clean, but nearly all of them love little children. And if sometimes you spoke to one kindly in the street

she would be very pleased, and God would be glad as well. For poor old ladies often have very few friends. What do you think of my telling you you ought to try and imitate the old woman in the story? This does not mean that you must speak disrespectfully to policemen. They are nearly always nice men, and no one who has not done wrong need be afraid of them, and if people were better they would not need to be severe so often. Besides, some policemen have boys and girls of their own, so you must behave better to them than the old lady did. But where you must imitate her is here. She thought of other people, and that is just what Jesus Christ is ever doing. Do you think entirely of yourself, or do you spare a thought now and then for other boys and girls? There are broken bits of bottle on the beach. Why not get other children to come with you and pick them up, so that no one's feet may be cut? Why not try and be less selfish, and think of others before yourself? Boys and girls who are always calling out "My turn next," "I bags that," "I spoke first," and such-like things, are not so good as they ought to be. "Others first, self last," was the motto of Jesus Christ, and it should be ours.

HOW THE FIRE WAS LIT

Not so very long ago there came to me word of a little girl whose father was once rich but had become very poor. Indeed, his little daughter was all he had left, for there was no mother, and he had no other children, and besides her dear father the lassie herself had nothing in the world save a beautiful workbox, which she prized much. Kind neighbours took pity and furnished a little cottage for them, and one day, when her father was away from home trying to find work, the girl moved into their new house and took with her the precious workbox. While she was setting things to rights a terrible storm came on, and as the rain fell the little woman nearly cried at the thought of her poor tired father being out in such weather. She knew he was not strong, and she did not feel she could spare him yet to join her dear mother.

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She waited in sadness for some time, and then at last she saw him coming up the road. He was wet

through, and when he entered the house he was so fatigued and cheerless that he seemed hardly able to change his damp clothes. While he was doing this the little girl kept calling to him and making jokes through the door, and saying she would soon have tea ready, and it would do him lots of good. But suddenly she felt quite bad about something. It was summer, and she had intended just to light a little fire to boil the kettle; but when she went to the kitchen there was no firewood. The kind neighbours had forgotten it, and she had never thought of it, and there was her father shivering with cold, and he must have some hot tea. What could she do? He must not wait while she went the long way to the shop. She thought a moment and then she waited a minute. Next she took her beautiful workbox and emptied out the cotton and things and broke up first the inside partitions and then the outer box, and so got wood for her fire that boiled the kettle.

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Her father did not know until some time after how she had sacrificed for his comfort; but God knew, and He was very pleased with her, for His Son had sacrificed Himself not for His Father, but

for men and women and boys and girls whom He loved. This is one reason why any deed of self-denial done to help others makes Him glad. Are you selfish, or do you try to help father and mother and the others at home? Did you ever give up anything to try and make someone else happy? Giving up things for others is not easy, but it is wonderful how happy it makes you afterwards. Greediness always makes people miserable before long; but those who sacrifice to help others please Jesus Christ and are made good themselves. Try it and see.

THE WIND AND THE SNOWDROP

This sounds a bit like a tale some of you have heard before, but it is not at all the same. One March morning the Sun met the Wind and said: "Good morning, Sister Wind." "Morning do you call it?" answered the Wind; "why, Brother Sun, I've been up all night, and you are always late in rising this time of year. Good afternoon!" The Sun looked very dignified and said: "Silence, sister, I make both morning and afternoon. But do not tease me. I want you to go and ask our cousin the Rain to come and see me. I want you both to help me." "I will go," said the Wind. "It is easy for me to get all over the place at once." And he whistled all the way to the Cloud Palace in which the Rain lived. He told the Rain that the Sun wanted to see her, but at first she would not come. "Our cousin the Sun," she remarked, "is not always polite. Whenever he meets me he always calls out 'Dry up!' and unless he goes away again I generally have to." "Oh, never mind that," coaxed the Wind; "he wants us all to help him."

"Well," answered the Rain, "it is always best to help others when you can, so lead the way."

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When they were together, the Sun said: "It is about a snowdrop. He ought to have been up and out in January, but he lies in the ground and won't budge. I have done my best with him, and he will not come up. Will you, Sister Wind, and you, Cousin Rain, go and see what you can do with him? He is in a little girl's garden not far away." They asked the Sun exactly where the flower was, and then the Rain said: "I will try first, if you don't mind." Away she went, but in an hour she came back weeping worse than usual. "I can't do it," she said. "I never came across such a stubborn root in my life. I was as quiet with it as I could be. I just fell all round it, and caressed it, and whispered to it, and coaxed it. Once it moved, and I thought it was coming up, but it only turned over and said: 'I wish plants had umbrellas, to keep off all the nasty wet!' Of course I could not stop after that. I am sorry, Cousin Sun, that I failed."

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"My turn, then," said the Wind, and away she whirled. In less than five minutes she was back,

very excited and screaming: "Oh, my most noble and good-for-nothing relatives, the snowdrop is up and out, and it is me that made it come!" "'It's me,'" said the Sun severely, "is bad grammar; but let us all go and see." Off they went, the Wind and the Rain leading; and when they reached the garden, there was as fine a snowdrop blossom as anyone has ever seen. "Why, Cousin Wind," asked the Rain, "how did you do it? I was as gentle as I always am in the spring, and it was no good." "And I," broke in the Sun, "was as genial as I could be. How did you do it, Sister Wind?" "Do it, Brother Sun?" came the answer. "Do it Cousin Rain? How did your powerful relative the Wind bring up the flower when you had failed? How did I do it? Why, I BLEW IT UP!"

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Is there any boy or any little girl who has read this and who will not do what a child ought without a blowing up? A great poet, whose name was John Milton, once wrote in a book that "Obedience is heaven's first law." He meant that in heaven everyone at once does what God tells him. Now, God wants us to behave as they do in heaven. It says in the Bible: "Children obey your parents in

the Lord; for this is right." But some children will not obey at once, and always wait until they are scolded. It is better to learn your lessons right away, but some boys and girls will never learn unless the teacher blows them up. This is wrong, for children ought to do even things they don't like as readily as they can. If you are commanded to do something you do not care for, always try to do it at once, and do it with a smile. One smile is worth all the sulks in the world. In the New Testament we are told about a boy called Jesus Christ that "The grace of God was upon Him. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." Do you think Jesus Christ ever had to be scolded? I don't. How was it?

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Do you not think that, perhaps, one reason was that, whenever His mother asked her Boy to do anything, He did it at once?

THE PARTY

It was one of the most wonderful parties that ever was, for it was given by a king in honour of the birthday of his only son. Only children were invited, and once they had come together the grown-up folk left them to themselves. For a time everybody was good, but by-and-by Wilhelm said something that made it easier for the others to be naughty. He called out, "I say, I've been counting, and there are eighteen of us and only seventeen cups and two plates of tarts, with nine on one and eight on the other, and seventeen little jellies, and just the same number of cakes and crackers. What shall we do?" "Turn someone out," cried Friedrich. "Who shall it be?" asked Wilhelm. The children looked at each other, for each was afraid of having to go, and at last a girl said, "Turn out the one whose birthday party it is!" When the others heard this they were rather ashamed, and Anna called out, "Not the Prince. Keep him. He can drink out of my cup!" "No, no," said the rest, "turn him out, and there'll be

just enough for us then." The Prince did not wait to be turned out. He just said gently, "I will not stay where I am not wanted." And, looking sad, but yet not crying, he opened the door and went away.

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When he was gone Anna called out, "For shame, children!" But they turned to her and said, "Be quiet, or we'll do something to you and send you out after." Then all of them got round the table. Gretchen poured out, and they started with the cake. But no one really enjoyed it. They all had an uncomfortable feeling that they had done wrong. Not one of them had finished his cake when Wilhelm said, "Let's have a game, and then come back to the table. Here, Friedrich, you pick up sides with me." They picked up, and there were nine on one side and eight on the other. This made them quarrel, for the smaller side said it was unfair. Both sides were getting very nasty indeed, when Anna called out, "Let us send and ask the Prince to come back, then we'll be nine a side." The side that was nine already did not like this, but the odd eight shouted so loudly they had to give in. "Here," called out one of them, "come back, Prince. We can't play fair without you."

The Prince did not sulk or say anything spiteful. He came back at once, and something about him made the others feel more ashamed than ever. They were very quiet for a minute, and then a big boy said, "I say, Prince, please forgive us. We didn't think." "All right," answered the Prince, with a smile, "let us play now." And they played and were very happy. Then they went back to the table and were happier still, for everyone wished to share with the Prince. Then they played again and had glorious times until their nurses came with shawls and umbrellas, and all buttoned up tight and said, "Good-bye, and thank you very much," to the Prince, and went home, and were not even cross the next morning.

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Who can explain the parable? Christmas Day is the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Heaven, and the Son of the great King who is the God and Father of all little children. On that day, years and years ago, He was born a little boy in Bethlehem. All our happy times at Christmas are just the birthday party of the Prince. Can anyone be so cruel as to turn him out? To forget Jesus altogether at Christmas time is worse than this. And children

who are greedy and selfish always banish Him; and if He is not with them the play goes all wrong, and no one is really happy. To want too much yourself, to want anything belonging to someone else, to play unfairly, and to do anything Jesus would not like is really to send the Prince away. But if you are happy yourself, and try and make others happy, if you are willing to share everything, if you play quite fairly and always try to please Jesus, then all goes well. The Prince is never far away from his birthday party, and He enjoys your fun, and you have a much better time because he is with you. Pray a little prayer, asking Jesus to be with you all through Christmas.

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT

It was the day after Christmas, and Mary was not happy. On Christmas Day she had eaten lots of things that were nice, and she had been allowed to stay up until twenty-six minutes past nine by father's watch. Also she had lots of presents, and they were all round her on the playroom floor. But she was not happy. Nurse said it was too much pudding, and mother said it was stopping up too late. All Mary knew was that she felt half cross and half miserable; and no one was surprised when she went to sleep on the floor. Nurse put a cushion under her head, and then sat down and watched.

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Mary slept, and as she slept she dreamed a dream. She felt herself feeling miserable, and then suddenly she felt happy, for Jesus Christ seemed to be by her side. He smiled at her and said: "Did you know it was My birthday yesterday?" "Oh, yes," Mary heard herself answer, "and, why!—You are always so good to me, and I never gave You a present!"

"Did you not, little one?" came the dream answer. "Well, it is not too late; if you get your Bible and ask mother to read you the fortieth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, you will learn that I once said: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'" Mary was just going to answer that she did not understand, when she woke up.

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She told nurse, and nurse at once took her to her mother. Mother listened, and got down the New Testament and read from verse thirty-one of the chapter; then she explained that all we do for the poor and the sad is looked upon by our Lord as being done to Himself. This made Mary think, and at last she said: "I know. I'll give away one of my toys to some poor little girl." Mother was quite willing, and they went back to the playroom and chose a beautiful white, woolly lamb. Then for a minute Mary felt inclined to keep it. But soon she had her jacket on and was out in the street, keeping hold of mother with one hand and carrying the lamb under her other arm. Mother knew where to go, and they went to a house where they found

the poorest little girl you ever saw. Her little hands were red-blue with cold, and her dress was all rags, and she had no shoes nor stockings on her feet. They talked to her and gave her the lamb, and really it looked as though she would never stop smiling. "My!" she said—"oh, my!" And she stroked its wool and talked to it as if it were a real lamb instead of a toy one. Then Mary's mother took her home.

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Mary went straight to the playroom again, and had a splendidly happy hour with her dolls and toys. She missed the lamb a little, but she felt happier than ever when she remembered where it had gone. She behaved nicely for the rest of the day, and at night did not at all mind when it was time for bed. After she was asleep, a very strange and beautiful thing happened. Again she dreamed, and once more she saw Jesus Christ. Something about Him made her say: "Here is the Good Shepherd." He came nearer to her, and she thought she was right, for there was a lamb in His arms. But when He was quite close, she looked hard, and He was carrying the very toy lamb she had given to the poor little girl. He was very pleased, and said,

with a happy look: "Thank you, little one! I had My birthday present." And Mary knew at once what the text in Matthew's Gospel meant; and when she awoke, she understood a great deal more besides. Is there any other girl or boy who will spare one toy at Christmas-time for a birthday present to Jesus Christ? You know how to give it to Him.

THE KNEELING BISHOP

Dr. Temple was once Archbishop of Canterbury, which means that he was the chief minister in the Church of England. He was a great man, and, like so many other ministers who are really kind-hearted, he was often rather stern. But when he saw children in real trouble, no one could be nicer; and he climbed trees after he was grown up. There is never very much wrong with a minister who climbs trees, and even when such men grow old and could not get up a tree except in a lift anyone who watches them is sure to learn fine things about them. A friend, who watched Archbishop Temple when he was nearly eighty years old, told this story about him. The Archbishop was at a service in that large, beautiful kind of a church called a cathedral, and the service was not short, and there were no children to address and the prayers were very long and he stayed all the time. He was not at all well; but he did not seem to notice this at all, and he knelt all during the long prayers. Kneeling a long time tires children, but

it tires old gentlemen even more. Yet the Archbishop knelt to the very end of the last prayer, and it must have hurt him, for he was so very poorly and weak. When the service was over his friend asked him why ever he had knelt for so long. And the good old man answered, "I always do that; my mother taught me."

* * * *

Was it not beautiful for a grown-up gentleman ten times as old as some children to remember what his mother had taught him? He must have remembered it for nearly seventy years. Some children cannot remember what their mother tells them for even seventy seconds, and it is not because they have bad memories, for every day they remember to get home in time for dinner. Strange, isn't it? Do you know anyone like them? If you looked into a looking-glass would you see some one who can never remember what mother says? The Archbishop not only remembered what his mother told him to do. He did it; and he had been grown up for over sixty years. Yet there is a boy who can read stories like this and he is beginning to think he is too old to do what his mother tells him; and there is a girl who often has to be talked to

because even when she remembers what her mother ordered she does not do it unless mother is there to see. This is very bad, for it is quite unlike Jesus Christ. Jesus was a boy once and had a mother who looked after Him, and it says in the New Testament that He was subject unto her. This means that always the child Jesus remembered what His mother asked Him to do and did it. The best children are those who try most to be like Jesus Christ. Always remember what mother tells you and always do what she wants, for every child's mother is worth loving and worth obeying.

A STORY OF GENERAL GORDON

Most children have heard of General Gordon; and those who have read his life know that he was an officer in the Royal Engineers and did wonderful work in teaching Chinese soldiers how to be skilful and brave. After this he came back to England and lived in Gravesend, where he was very kind indeed to street boys and taught them to fear God and become little men. Then he went out to Egypt, and some years after he was shut up in Khartoum by the troops of the Mahdi. For eighteen months he held that town against hordes of fierce Arabs, but at last some traitor betrayed Khartoum into the hands of his enemies and the heroic General was killed. It is not always that men as brave as General Gordon are kind-hearted, but he was full of consideration for others, as this story shows.

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One day General Gordon went into a hospital to which sick soldiers were sent that they might get

well. It was very hot indeed, and the General went from bed to bed speaking kind words to try and cheer those who were ill. In one bed lay a man who was very much troubled by flies. There are some people whom flies like more than they do others, and he was one of them. When you are quite well it is not bad fun hitting at flies to keep them off, especially if you do not let them make you cross ; but when you are ill and weak flies are more than a bother. General Gordon noticed this poor man and he saw the flies. He said a kind word to the patient and then turned and left the room. Down the steps of the hospital he strode, through the door and along the street into a shop. In the shop he asked a young lady behind the counter if she could sell him a fan. She was rather amused at a great strong soldier wanting a fan, but she said nothing, and she sold him what he required. He took it from her and returned to the hospital. Then he went back again to the room he had left, and turning to the nurse, said, "I noticed that the poor man over there is bothered by the flies. Will you please give him this fan and then he will be able to keep them away?" The nurse did as General Gordon asked her. You may be sure that the sick man was very pleased, not only with the

fan, but also with the kind way in which General Gordon had thought of him.

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How many of my little readers are as kind and thoughtful as was General Gordon? When anyone is ill at home do you run about and bang doors and stamp on the stairs and shout? Or do you walk gently and speak in a quiet voice? If you behave nicely when someone is ill it will please everybody in the house. And if, after asking permission of mother or nurse, you put a little head inside the sick-room door and say, "Good morning, I do hope you will soon be quite well," why, there are lots of sick folk who would feel better at once. Never forget that when anyone is ill at home everybody else must be kind and sympathetic and gentle. Again, if a great brave soldier like General Gordon was considerate and thought of others, might not small boys and girls try and be like him? The worst of it is that whether other people are sick or well some children think only of themselves. Try and think more about others and always be considerate. Considerate is a long word and it would be very nice if you could learn to spell it, but it is even better still to live it. Jesus

Christ was considerate; He always thought of Himself last and of all other folk first. Think of Him a great deal and pray to him a little prayer asking Him to help you to be as kind-hearted and thoughtful of others as He Himself was.

THE SPANISH BEGGAR

This is a story of an English gentleman who was staying in Spain, and who every day used to go into a church to sketch. The way into the church was up some wide steps, and on them there always sat a beggar, old and dirty, and wrapped in a ragged cloak. The gentleman was very sorry for him, and each day he gave him a penny; and as he received it he would take off his hat with a sweep and would bow and smile, for in Spain beggars are as polite as good boys and girls in England. But the gentleman hardly noticed him do all this, though he never forgot to bring him the penny. The beggar knew he had not noticed, and he wanted him to understand how thankful he was, so one day he did a strange thing. When the gentleman offered him the penny he took hold of his hand and kissed it. This very much surprised the kind giver, and at first he looked disgusted, for the beggar was really very dirty, and not at all nice outside. But at once he remembered that both he and the poor man were children of God; and so, to the

amazement of the passers-by he bent down and kissed the beggar on the cheek, then he went his way into the church.

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Could you have done that? Perhaps not; but I do hope you are as nice to poor people as you are to others. The gentleman always was, and he was a very great man and a rich one; his name was John Ruskin. If you do not know about him, ask someone older to tell you; but before you do so read to the end of this tale. The beggar felt that because Mr. Ruskin was so kind to him he must do something more to show his gratitude. He thought a long time, and then decided he must give him the most precious thing he had. It was a piece of brown cloth, about which he believed all sorts of strange things. First he believed that it had been part of a robe of a very good man who died hundreds of years ago, and who was called Francis of Assisi. In another story you have read something about him. Then the beggar believed that because the bit of cloth had once belonged to such a saint it kept him from being ill. I do not think it helped him at all, but you see he thought it did. Yet he took his precious piece of cloth,

and he hobbled away to where Mr. Ruskin was staying and he offered it to him as a present. I do not expect the gentleman took it, but you may be sure he was very pleased.

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How glad Jesus Christ would be if all the children who read this were as grateful as was the beggar. It is a pity that more of you are not, for most people are kind to girls and boys. Yet I have heard of a house not far from London in which the children take all they can get, and grumble and cry for more. There is a place in Yorkshire in which lives a little girl who never says "Thank you" to the servant. Of course you cannot give a present to everyone who is kind to you, but you can feel thankful, and say what you feel. Boys and girls ought especially to thank the great loving Father in heaven for all his goodness to them. Do not forget, when you say your prayers to-night.

THE KING THAT CRIED

A LONG time ago there was a boy who was a king. He had a tutor, which means having a schoolmaster at home to live with you. He had a lot of servants, who wore yellow knickerbockers and bowed low and called him "Your Majesty." Also he lived in a palace and had more ponies than he could ride, and he wore Sunday clothes on week-days. But he was not happy, and he got very tired of having every day and all day to be as proper as though he were out to tea. One day he sat on his throne very lonely and crying and with his crown in his lap. An old serving-man who loved him was sorry to see him cry, and came near and bowed and said, "May it please Your Majesty." The King looked and said, "Speak, sirrah," which was his royal way of addressing servants. The old man did not mind, but obeyed. "Your Majesty," he said, "is unhappy. Is Your Majesty aware that there is an aged dame who lives in a cave in the King's forest and who sells in bottles a liquid which if anyone drinks makes him happy at once?"

"Nonsense, varlet," answered the King, "I mind me that once I drank six bottles of stone ginger-beer in seven minutes, and I feel unhappy every time I remember it." "Your Majesty," answered the servant, "this is different." "If you are sure," rejoined the King, "take my crown and put it in the cupboard, and bring a bagful of pennies and we will go and buy."

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When they got to the cave of the aged dame she came out and said, "Good morning, little boy." "Little boy, indeed! old woman," said the King, haughtily, "I am a king." "Oh, are you?" answered the aged dame; "if you are a king you must be polite and call me 'Madam,' or I will have nothing to do with you." "Madam," rejoined the King, "I want a large bottle of the elixir of happiness; I want to be a happy boy for a whole day; how much?" "Sir," replied the aged dame, "I do not sell, for no one can buy happiness. But here is a bottle. Go home and drink." And she gave him a funny black flask with wickerwork all round. When they got home to the palace the King called for the Lord High Cork Puller, and he opened the bottle with a golden corkscrew. They poured the

liquid into a crystal goblet, and His Majesty drank. Then His Majesty made a face and said, "Ugh! how bitter! I must have got the wrong bottle." And he was more unhappy than ever. They fetched him cake to eat with it, but that made it no better, and he went into the palace garden a very miserable boy.

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He walked about until he came to the great bronze gate where the soldiers were on guard. They all saluted; but he hardly noticed, for he had seen a poor boy in the road. There, sitting on the edge of the pavement, was such a ragged boy smiling away in the sun! The King went to him and said, "Good-morning; I am the King, you will please come into my palace and taste some elixir of happiness that I got this morning." "Never heard of it, Mister," came the answer, "but if it's not medicine I'll come." When they got to the palace the King had two goblets brought, and the Lord High Pourer Out filled them. They were both going to drink, when the ragged boy felt in an inside pocket and pulled out a big piece of bread. "Here, King," he said, "this is my dinner. Halves, Mister. You drag one end and I will drag the other." The King stared and said, "I tried cake

just now, and it was no good." "Don't care," was the reply, "share's fair. You have half of my bread, or you can drink all your stuff yourself." The King then pulled, and they divided the bread. Together they drank, and His Majesty was surprised, for at once he felt as glad as he could possibly be. And when the small boy began to smile more than ever and said to the King, "Here, King, bend down and give us a back," before he knew what he was doing they were playing leapfrog in spite of the astonished courtiers. When they were out of breath they sat down again and began to talk, and the King said, "Let some one fetch my tutor for me, to explain how it is that the elixir of happiness was so bitter before and is so sweet now." The tutor, who was an old man with a nice face and a long white beard, came and bowed low and said, "Your Majesty, the reason is very simple. We never have any happiness as long as we keep things to ourselves, but the moment we share the best things that we have we are as glad as we can be." And the King understood. Do the boys and girls who have read this understand?

"TOGETHER THEY DRANK."

ABOUT MOTHER

THERE was once a boy whose name was John Keats. When he grew up he was a very celebrated poet, but while he was a lad he was just like other boys. He was very fond indeed of his mother, and when she was taken ill he was very sad; and though he was only four years old he wondered what he could do to make her better. One morning the doctor came and made him feel still worse, because he said that John's mother was very unwell indeed, and she must have perfect quiet in her room without anyone going in to disturb her, or else he hardly knew what might happen. The boy heard this, and at once something came into his mind by which he could help his dear mother to rest. Somewhere in the house there was an old sword that used to belong to a soldier who had done all sorts of things with it. Now it was quite blunt, but I expect that if you hit anyone with it, it would have hurt. John must have thought so, for he fetched that sword and put it over his shoulder, and he stood outside his mother's door for three hours

as a sentinel, and stopped everybody from going in until she was quite rested.

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Was not that a fine thing to do? Do you wonder that John Keats became a great man when you read such things as these about him? It is always a sign of the best kind of boy or the noblest kind of girl when a child thinks a great deal of mother. Some of you have heard of the great General Garfield, who, from being a poor lad, rose to be President of the United States of America. How many of you know that after he had passed through the ceremony that made him President, he turned right round and kissed his mother before everybody? This must have pleased her very much, for mothers like their boys and girls to think a great deal of them. Do you think a great deal of your mother? I would not give much for a lad who does not think his mother the finest woman in the world. And as for girls who are foolish enough not to think the same, I would put them all in a field together and sell them at five a penny. I am afraid, however, that nobody would buy them.

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Some boys and girls think a great deal both of mother and father, but they do not show it as they

might. One of the best ways to show how much you think of mother is by doing what you can to help her. This was what John Keats did, and it is what Jesus Christ would like all children to do. How much do you do to help mother? When there is an errand to run, are you the first to offer, or do you grumble and say you want to go and play? Do the boys and girls who read these lines do anything to help mother in the house? Emile Loubet, the gentleman who was President of France, was very sad a little time ago because his mother died. But there is a thing that he did once that he must be pleased to remember. His mother had been very poor, and was not at all a great lady except in her soul; and to the last she lived as much like a poor woman as her son would let her. One day he went to see her, and she said to him, "Emile, I am so glad you have come, as I have a lot of baking to do this morning, and I cannot do it all myself." And though Emile Loubet was the head of the Government of France, he took off his coat and he helped his mother bake. I expect he looked rather funny with his hands covered with flour, but I would rather have seen him like that than when he stood before the people as the President of France. I do not suppose that all mothers would care for their boys and

girls to help either them or the cook like this, and I should be very sorry to have to eat what some of them would make. But there are lots of things besides this that you can do to help mother. Always wiping your boots on the mat is one, because it saves dirt in the house. Noticing when mother has a headache, and playing very quietly, is another. And if children want to do something to help mother at once, let my little readers wait till mother sits down and then go and put a hand on her knee and say, "Mother, I think you are the best mother in all the world!"

STICK-AT-IT-IVENESS

STICK-AT-IT-IVENESS is one of the newest ways of spelling perseverance, which is a long word, meaning "Try again." Clever boys and girls can spell it all three ways, but it is easier to spell than really to persevere. The mouse about whom this story is to be told could not even spell cat, but he believed in trying again. One day some men were digging holes for telegraph poles, and before one deep hole had been filled up the poor little mouse fell right into it. He squealed a little because he was hurt, and then he began to run round and round to find a way of escape. This was not easy, but when the men left work that evening he was still trying.

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When they saw him next morning he had commenced to scrape out with his paws a little channel that was rising round the sides of the hole. They were so interested that they decided to leave the hole unoccupied, so as to see whether he would be able to get out. He dug away, and at last it was

clear that he was trying to make a spiral groove up which he could climb. The men were so pleased with him that they threw food into the hole. This seemed to encourage him, and he worked on day after day until, at the end of a fortnight, he came to a large piece of stone set in the earth right across his path. This made the men sorry, and I think they ought to have lifted him out. But they did not. They were working a long way from the mouse by then, and they liked to look in on him as they went to and fro.

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The large stone puzzled him a great deal. For nearly a day he tried to get under or round or over it, but it was too big. Then he turned his narrow channel another way and began to dig the rising spiral in an opposite direction. For more than another week he scraped his path with his little paws, and each scratch brought him nearer the top. Just a month after he fell in the men stopped on their way to work to feed him, and he was so near the surface that they expected him to be gone by night. When evening came they looked eagerly, and they were delighted to see that the plucky little

creature had escaped. There was a track that ran all round the sides and up the hole, but the mouse was gone.

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What do you think about this tale? Did you ever tumble into a hole? Bad habits are holes into which some children fall. There is the bad temper hole, and the sulks hole, and the untidiness hole, and the hole of disobedience. None of them are easy to climb out of, but there is a way up. Anyhow, it is no good just to sit crying or grumbling at the bottom of the hole. You must try and get out. Perhaps it will be hard, but a sure way to succeed is this—pray and try, then pray again and try. Then pray once more and try again. Do not be discouraged, and never give up; but, however hard it is, pray and try again. Stick at it, and do not be beaten in perseverance by a mouse. To pray is to ask God to do His best for you, and to try again is to do the best you can, with His help, for yourself. Boys and girls who both pray and persevere are sure to find a way out of bad temper, or sulks, or disobedience, or any other hole into which they may have fallen.

A LOVER OF THE PEOPLE

EARLY in the last century there was a small boy who was the son of an eminent doctor in Genoa, in Italy. His name was Giuseppe Mazzini. He was not a strong lad, and always his mother kept him either in the house or in their sunny garden. But at last one day she told him that if he was a good boy he should go out for a little walk with her. Giuseppe ran to his nurse, and she dressed him in his fine clothes, and soon he was dancing just inside the front door, all impatience for his mother to come. When she came he pushed a hand into one of hers, and together they went into the street. The boy was very pleased with the horses and carts, with the other children, with an occasional sailor-man who passed by, and with all the colour and movement of the city. But before they had gone very far he stood quite still, and his mother, feeling him stop, halted also. The little boy was looking hard at the steps of a church, for sitting on the stone was an old man, who seemed very poor and very miserable. Giuseppe looked at him with such

a troubled face that his mother thought he was frightened, and she bent down to lift the little fellow and to carry him away. But as she stooped he ran right off and went to the poor old man and put his arms round his neck and kissed him again and again, and called out to his mother, who had followed him, "Give him something, mother, give him something." You may be sure his mother did what her little boy asked. The old man bowed, and was grateful for her gift, but he was much more pleased with the kindness of Giuseppe. He was so happy that tears came into his eyes, and he nervously stroked his long white beard, and tried to smile and to cry together. Then he put a hand on the boy's head, and he took one of Giuseppe's hands in his other one and kissed it. Next he looked at the lad's mother and said, "Love him well, lady. He is one who will love the people."

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Giuseppe's mother did love him well, and looked after him as good mothers always look after their children. He grew up to be a very great man, and to do what the beggar had said. Boys and girls cannot understand all that Giuseppe Mazzini was and did, but it will help them to know that he cared

so much for the people that he lived for them and suffered for them and wrote for them. And because they believed a great deal that he taught, his countrymen shook off the yoke of tyrants and became free. All this was pleasing to Jesus Christ, for always the Master loves the people, and He lived for their helping and died for their sins. It would be a splendid thing if you would think a little more about folk who are poor, and would try to love them as did Giuseppe; and if you will notice Jesus Christ and see how He cared for everyone, it will help you to feel tender towards men and women, especially when they are in rags. Is there not something else you might learn to do? It is sad to think that to-day in England there are many strong men who cannot get any work. Some of these men have little children who are just like you, and because the father cannot get work there is no money to buy them food, and sometimes they cry themselves to sleep, hungry. Always pray for such people; and if where you live there are so many that those who are better off are collecting money to help them, ask mother to let you open the money-box and take out of it what she agrees to, so that some poor little child may be helped by your pennies. You will enjoy your own food all the

more if you can feel that you have helped some other little boy or girl to get something to eat; and if you continue to think of those who are poor, with the blessing of God you will become like that little boy in Genoa, and will grow up as one who loves the people.

THE HERMIT WHO SMILED

A LONG time ago there used to be a number of good men who were called hermits. They really were trying very hard to follow Jesus Christ, and they were so anxious to obey Him that they used to get as far away from everybody as they could, and live each man by himself. Now, this was a mistake, for two reasons. First, you can be just as wicked when you live all alone as when you live in a place that is full of girls and boys; and the hermits used to think lots of evil thoughts, and besides some of them got proud just like those lads and lasses who think they are better than other children. Then, second, Jesus Christ wants us to live with other people and to be as good as we can, and so help the rest to be like Him. But the hermits did not know this, and so they lived in all sorts of lonely and queer places. One whose name was Simon lived on the top of a high pillar, and hardly ever came down for twenty-eight years.

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There was another, who was a very good man, and who was quite ready to help anyone who passed his door. His father and mother and his brothers and sisters loved him very much, and used to try and persuade him to come and live with them again. But when they came to see him, he always scolded them so much for asking him to go home, that other people began to say a very funny thing about him. They often laughed and told each other: "He loves everybody except his own relatives." This makes me think of some boys and girls who behave nicely to everyone except their parents and the other children at home.

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But now I want to tell you about another hermit. He was called Macarius, and he lived in a hut in a desert. In the same desert, only a long way from each other, there lived other hermits in little houses built as though round a very big circle. One day Macarius was ill. I forget what was the matter, but someone heard about it and came to see him, and brought him a large bunch of grapes. You know when people are sick, they can sometimes eat grapes when they cannot eat anything else; and when Macarius saw

them, his mouth watered, and he was very glad. But before he had touched one he remembered that his nearest neighbour, a hermit, who lived some distance away, was fond of grapes, and he made up his mind he could not be selfish, and so he sent the whole bunch on to him.

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He had nearly forgotten all about them when the next day a man came to see him. "I have come," he said, "from your neighbour." "Which neighbour," asked Macarius—"the one I sent a present to yesterday, or the one on the other side of my house?" "The one I come from," said the man, "is not the one you sent the grapes to, but the other at the far end of the circle. He has heard that you like grapes, and instead of your sending him any he has sent a fine bunch to you. And here it is." With these words he held out to Macarius what he had brought. The hermit looked hard and then said excitedly: "Turn the bunch round. Is there a broken stalk tied round with a vine tendril? Why, it's the very bunch I sent away yesterday. Dear me! it must have gone to Simon, and he thought it would be unselfish to send it to Paul, and Paul thought that Anthony liked grapes

"AND BROUGHT HIM A LARGE BUNCH OF GRAPES."

better than he did, and so he sent the bunch on, and each hermit sent it as a present to his neighbour, and so it has come back to me. Well, well!" And the good man smiled and rubbed his hands till his visitor was puzzled at his goings on.

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I wonder who had the grapes, after all? I never heard, for the story stops there. But I do know that it was Christlike and very generous for each hermit to give the bunch away to his neighbour. Are the boys and girls who read this page always generous? I am sure there are some who would never have given all the grapes away. Are there any who would never even have shared them with the rest? Jesus Christ was always generous Himself, and He likes girls and boys to be unselfish. Selfish children are not the happiest children, and there is no pleasure in the world like being kind to some other lad or lass, or to some poor baby, or to a poor old woman.

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There is a verse in Proverbs that applies to good girls as well as to good women, and it runs: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Did you

ever read some words of Christ which say: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise"? The text really means that we must always share whatever we have got. Do not forget this, and the next time you have grapes, or an apple, or sweets, or cake, divide with someone else who has none. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The late King William of Prussia was one day sitting in his palace, and in the room with him there was a little girl seven years old. When grown-up people are left alone with children they very often ask them questions about what they are learning at school or from the governess; this is not always very nice for boys and girls, but it is not so bad if you know enough to answer all that is asked. This little girl had evidently learnt her lessons very well, for when the King pointed to the top of a marble table and asked, "To what kingdom does this belong?" she replied at once, "Sire, that belongs to the mineral kingdom." I expect she hoped that she would not have any more questions, but the King was so pleased with her reply that he smiled and asked her another.

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This time he pointed to a rose which stood on the table in a vase, and said, "To what kingdom does this belong?" The little girl answered him at once, "The rose belongs to the vegetable

kingdom." King William must have begun to think that he had never met such a clever child, and next he pointed to a rug on the floor. The rug was really the skin of a leopard, and to the question as to what kingdom it belonged to the child answered, "To the animal kingdom." Again the King was surprised, and he made up his mind that somehow he would puzzle the little one. So he looked at her again, and he said, "To what kingdom do you and I belong?" This time the little girl smiled, and as she smiled she said, "Sire, we belong to the kingdom of heaven."

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Don't you think that was a very good answer, and good because it is so true? I know, of course, that sometimes one boy will tell another that he has a head like a turnip, and I have even heard of a girl who said somebody else was a little donkey. I don't think such unkind charges are ever true, but even if they are they do not prove that boys and girls belong either to the vegetable or to the animal kingdom. Indeed, all children everywhere are children of the great Father who is King of heaven, and so they also belong to the kingdom of heaven. Yet somehow I am afraid that boys and girls too

often forget this, and act as though they were at least related to the animal kingdom. What about little tempers? Do you not think that when you get very cross you are perhaps more like a tiger than a child of the kingdom of heaven? What about being greedy and always taking the best piece? Don't you think that children who act thus are showing a little bit of the wolf? What about being very proud when you have got on your smart clothes and making fun of boys and girls whose parents are too poor to dress them in fine things? Don't you think that being proud like that is showing something of the peacock, who likes to walk on the lawn with his tail spread out and shining in the sun, as if to say, "Will everybody please admire me"? Surely faults like these make it look sometimes as though some girls and boys belong to the animal kingdom; but really you don't, and you ought always to try and live like the children of the great King. Instead of being greedy we ought to be willing to share everything with other people. Instead of being cross we ought to try and be kind-hearted and good-tempered, and instead of being proud we ought to think very little of ourselves. These things are not easy, but let the boys and girls look to Jesus Christ,

Who is the Prince of the kingdom and Who loves us because He is our Elder Brother, and He will teach them what is right and will help them to live like good children who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE TWO SACKS

The boy and the girl were walking through the wood hand in hand, and the old man met them. "Good-afternoon," he said; "to-morrow morning at nine of the clock I want you to meet me here, and each bring two sacks." "What for, sir?" asked the children. "You will please bring two sacks each, because to-morrow we are going to carry away some faults. One sack is for your own faults, and the other is for those of other children." "Well, but——" said the little girl. "Never mind the 'buts,'" broke in the old man. "You want to know what faults look like. That does not matter; bring your two sacks each." And the old gentleman went his own way, leaning upon his stick.

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"Dear me!" said the girl. "Well, I never!" said the boy, "two sacks each!" "Yes," went on the girl, "I shall get a big one for the other children's faults, and a little one for my own." "Same with me," said the boy; "and we shall

want a real big one for other children's faults. Why, Tommy has a terrible temper." "And Susan," broke in the girl, "is a regular spitfire." "And Harry," continued the boy, "always has dirty hands, and Jimmy can never remember to feed his rabbit." "And Mary," said his sister, "is always untidy, and Jane uses slang, and Minnie tells lies. What big sacks we shall want! Let's go and get them." And they went.

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Next morning the old man hobbled along on his stick. "Here we are!" called out the boy and girl. "We have each a big sack for other children's faults, and a little one for our own." The old man smiled, and with a "Follow me!" led the way along a path that finished within a cave in the depths of the forest. When they were inside, he spoke through the dark. "This cave is full of your own faults. Fill up your sacks." "Why," said the girl, "I can't see anything." "Very few children," answered the old man, "can see their own faults, but they exist for all that. Reach out your hands and put what you find in your sack. Let the boy do the same." Then he smiled again, but no one saw him, because there was no light in the cave.

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The two smaller sacks were unrolled, and then the children gathered things from the floor of the cave and put them in. They felt quite sad as they did it, and the girl nearly began to cry when she found that her sack was half full, and yet a large number of faults were left. The next minute she heard the boy say: "Why, I've filled my sack full, and there's lots more of our faults to come. Are you sure you are gathering your fair share?" "Quite sure," answered the little girl; "my sack is nearly full as well. I expect we must each try the other sack." No one spoke for a little while, and then the girl burst out: "The sack I brought for the other children's faults is nearly full, and the floor near me is quite covered yet." "Mine," answered the boy, "is quite full, and I am sure there are enough faults near me to fill them both again. I am so ashamed, and——" "Children," interrupted the old man, "come out into the light and let us talk. Leave the four sacks behind."

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The sunshine made them blink, and even the boy was very glad of the excuse to rub his eyes. "Now," said the old man, "I hope you both understand You are very nice children, but I heard you

yesterday morning finding fault with all the other boys and girls you know. It is never nice to find fault with other people, and I wanted you to learn that you have so many faults of your own to correct that you really cannot spare time to blame other children and to say things about them behind their backs." When the old man had finished speaking, there was silence for more than two minutes, for the girl and the boy both felt the pricking of conscience, and each of them was very uncomfortable and very much ashamed, and was thinking hard. At last the girl faltered out: "We are very sorry, and——" Then she had to start again, and she hung her head down and said: "We are sorry, and we are sure that Jesus Christ does not like us to find fault with others, especially when we are so often wrong ourselves." "I remember," added the boy, "it says something in the Bible about a mote and a beam. Mother once explained to me what Jesus meant." The old man smiled again. "I like what you are saying," he said gently. "Get the New Testament and find the place and read it again; and if you do not understand, ask some one who does. And be sure to try and forget other children's faults and to think of your own, and to ask Jesus Christ to help you cure them."

THE WRECK

One night as I lay asleep in a little room in Cornwall I was awakened by the sound of a gun. I sat up and listened, and soon above the howling of the wind and the roar of the sea I heard the noise of hurrying feet on the road. All this meant that some vessel was in distress and that the people were running to get the lifeboat out. So I dressed quickly, and soon I stood with the others on the cliff. Word had been telephoned from up the coast of a large ship drifting in the bay, and because the weather was wild and the cruel rocks were near every one wanted the lifeboat to go out at once to the poor sailors. But this proved impossible. The tempest was so wild that the lifeboat could not be launched. So we left a man on the look-out and went home again with a prayer for those in peril on the sea.

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The lifeboat men did not go to bed, but waited, hoping that they might soon be able to put out.

Hour after hour the angry sea sent up great heaving hills of water, but at daybreak its fierceness moderated a little. At once the men were in the boat, and we sent them down the slip with a cheer. The white craft took the water well, and the rowers passed into the mist. An hour later the fog lifted, and we saw the vessel that was in danger. It stood out in the water nearly ten miles away, a black mass, rocking and rolling. The lifeboat men rowed hard, and at last—through glasses—we saw them nearing the vessel. A few hours after the lifeboat was back in the little harbour, bringing in it eleven weary men and a white-faced woman. At once we noticed that there were no officers with the company, and when they had been fed and warmly clothed we asked how this was.

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For answer they told us a very strange story. They said their vessel was Italian, and when it was clear it was beginning to sink, the officers all got together in one part of the deck. Then they put a line across the ship, between themselves and the others; and they told the sailors not to move away from where they were, for if they came

into the officers' section of the deck they would so disturb the balance of the vessel that it would sink at once. The sailors believed them, though afterwards they knew the officers only spoke thus because they were selfish and deceitful. For while the sailor-men remained in their places, afraid to go over the line, the officers took the only boat on the ship and lowered it into the water, and climbing over the side dropped into it. The crew cried out in terror, but the officers rowed away; and before they were many yards from the ship their boat turned right over and they were drowned before the eyes of the men they had abandoned. The next morning the sailors were rescued, but no one ever heard of any of the officers again.

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Does being selfish and deceitful ever pay? Of course, it does not always happen that selfish people are punished as were these officers. But always selfish folk lose more than they gain. For whenever grown-up people or boys or girls are selfish, they at least lose the chance of being like Jesus Christ; and the worst of it is that the more selfish you are, the harder it is to be unselfish. Jesus was never selfish. He never strove for

Himself to the hurt of others. He never just took care of Himself and did not care what happened to others. He always helped everybody all He could, and everyone felt that selfishness and Christ were quite different. The Italian officers were selfish, and lost their lives. Every time children are selfish they lose something of the better life all ought to live. Which are you most like, the Italian officers or Jesus Christ? Are you going to be selfish to-morrow in the play-ground or at meal-times? Or are you going to try hard to be unselfish and think of others first, just like Jesus, the great Big Brother of the children?

CAP

Some years ago there was a little girl whose name was Florence, and she had a pony on which she was riding over the grassy Downs. With her was her friend, the clergyman of the parish, and as they rode along they saw a strange sight. They came to a shepherd who was trying all by himself to collect his sheep, but he had no dog, and he did not find it easy. I do not know whether he tried to bark himself, for I have only been told that he ran about, and that the more he ran the more the sheep got scattered. When Florence and her friend came to where he was they pulled up, and asked him why he was without his collie. For answer the poor shepherd told them a very sad tale. His dog, whose name was Cap, had hurt one of its legs so badly that he thought the bone must be broken, and he was afraid it was in such pain that he would have to kill it to put it out of its misery. "I must just take a rope," he said, "and hang the poor old dog."

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When Florence heard this she was so troubled that she asked at once where the poor dog was, and with her friend she rode to where he was lying in the shepherd's hut. There he was, poor Cap, right in the corner looking ever so miserable, and yet just able to wag his tail when they came in as though he wished to say, "I am not at all well, but I am all right this end." They bent down, and the clergyman felt the swollen limb of the dog. "Why," said he, "the bone is not broken at all. We must treat it with hot fomentations, and then the swelling will go down." "What are hot fomentations?" asked Florence. The clergyman explained that fomentations meant strips of linen soaked in hot water, and then wound round any swollen place to make the swelling go down. Florence was delighted at the idea, and at once she lit a fire and put on a kettle. Then she looked round for some linen to tear into strips. She could find nothing except the shepherd's Sunday smock, which was hanging behind the door. "I must have that," she said, "and mother must give him a new one." So she tore it into pieces, and dipped the strips into hot water, and then wound the bandages all round the leg of poor Cap, who was so patient, and who whined, as much as to say, "I don't feel well enough

to bark, but I am saying 'Thank you' in my own way."

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When this was done the clergyman wanted the little girl to go away with him, but she wished to stay, and asked him to let her mother know where she was. All day she remained with the dog, and more than once she put on fresh fomentations, so that by about tea-time the swelling had gone down. When evening came she heard the footsteps of the shepherd outside, and as he opened the door he was looking very troubled, for he was carrying an ugly rope. When Cap saw him he made several little noises of welcome, which so delighted the shepherd that he said, "Why, Miss, the dog is better. I never thought to have him greet me like that again." "Throw away your rope," said Florence, "and let me show you how to make fomentations." She taught the shepherd, and then went away. But day after day she came again until Cap was able to run about and bark and to look after the sheep once more.

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Do the children who have read this know who the little girl was? Everybody heard about her

afterwards, for she was known as Miss Florence Nightingale, who went out and nursed our poor soldiers when they were wounded in fighting with Russia. To-day she still lives, a kind, gracious old lady, with much of the pity of Christ in her heart. Would you like to grow up like her, tender-hearted and gentle and full of kindness? If so, look to Christ and ask Him to help you to be kind. How do you behave to animals? I know some boys who, if they had seen Cap limping along, would have said, "Look at the old lame dog," and have thrown stones at him. I know some girls who never lose a chance of pinching the cat's tail. But surely the way Florence acted was the better way! Let us remember that God always wants us to be kind to animals, for it is the boys and girls who are good to them who grow up kind-hearted men and tender-hearted women.

THE PRIDE OF SUSAN

SUSAN was a hen who lived in a lofty hen-house, wherein dwelt a rooster and lots of other chickens. Susan was greedy, and always picked up more corn than was really her share, and tried to drive smaller hens away, so that they might have nothing at all. This was no better than children who do not share fairly with little brothers and sisters; and one day the rooster, who was greedy himself, got so cross with Susan that he beat her with his wing and pecked her hard. But that is a different tale. This story is about Susan and her eggs. Susan laid eggs regularly, and she laid them well. Sometimes they had double yolks, and always they were good and had hard shells, for Susan ate much gravel, and considered herself a lady of grit. The eggs pleased Susan's owner, who was a farmer with a little girl. And one day the little girl peered through the wire netting of the chicken-run and said aloud to a playmate, "Jimmy, my father says that hen over there is the best layer that ever was. Her name is Susan, and mother says she always puts

one of her eggs in my custard." Susan heard these words, and with her hearing began the sad part of this tale. For, being praised thus, the next time she laid an egg Susan cackled herself into a sore throat. She was becoming conceited. And when you are greedy already, to become conceited as well never pays. Poor Susan!

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Poor Susan! poor feathery Susan! Get out your handkerchief, or lift up the corner of your pinafore, and get ready to cry. For Susan got more and more conceited with each egg she laid. Then she cackled so long that it hardly seemed worth while to stop, so she cackled nearly all day. Cackling is a hen's way of boasting. When children or hens boast, children are wrong and hens are no better. If you are fond of bragging, ask someone to say, "Poor Susan!" to you, and perhaps it will help you to stop boasting. It was a pity no one scolded Susan, for with much boasting she spoiled herself, and at last she got too proud to do anything in the ordinary way. Excepting a few foolish hens, who scatter eggs in fields and hedges, most of them lay in a nest on the floor of the henhouse. Susan had a beautiful nest, like a box, with

a lid on and the front knocked out. In the bottom of it was some hay, and just in front of where she used to sit was a board to keep the draught out. At one time Susan had been very proud of all this, but by degrees she thought it was not worthy of her. She said it was low, and a hen that laid such eggs as hers ought to have something higher; and at last she thought of something that seemed good enough for her. She stood out in the chicken-run and cackled for silence. The others came around her, and very solemnly she said, "We will have a public meeting, and I will speak." "I, then," called out the rooster, "will take the chair." And he stood on a brick and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, you do not expect a speech from me. Susan here will speak to you later, and she knows more about what she is going to say than I do. Indeed, I do not know at all what she means to tell us. Susan will now address the meeting." This was rather good of the rooster, for it was the kind of speech a chairman always makes. But the others forgot his address when Susan cleared her throat, and drank some water out of a trough and began.

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She was rather nervous, but this was what she said, "Mr. Rooster and my feathered friends, I

feel it my duty to inform you that I consider the old way of laying eggs derogatory to my dignity." At this point one young chick asked another, "What does 'drogatory to her dignity' mean?" "She means," said his friend, "she's grown too proud to lay eggs in a nest on the ground." Susan heard them talking, and stopped, offended, until they had finished, and then she continued her speech. "I was saying, when my young friends began whispering, that I intend giving up the old way of laying eggs. Laying them near the ground is low. Therefore in future I shall lay all my eggs from the perch." This was such a new idea, and sounded so terrible, that all her hearers were stupefied. The rooster fell off his brick in amazement, and they were all too astonished to raise a single cackle. Before anyone could speak, Susan had left them and had entered the chicken-house. No one dared follow her, and she was left alone. Some time after Susan came out and cackled as she had never cackled before. Then the rooster went in, and on the floor of the house he saw a smashed shell and some yellow yolk. Susan had done as she said.

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Poor Susan! Weep again, children, for this is where the tale gets sadder still. Susan's owner

saw the broken egg, and the next day there was another near the same place; and there was no egg in Susan's nest at all. Here I must hurry to an end. The day after the farmer's little girl had fowl for dinner. Poor Susan! When the little girl had finished she said, "Mother, may I take the chicken-bones out into the run for Susan to peck the meat off?" And her mother smiled and said, "You won't find her there. She laid eggs from the perch, and they broke. I expect she got proud." The last time I saw the lassie she and Jimmy were looking through the wire of the run, and she was saying, "Poor Susan! Jimmy, let's you and me never get conceited." And Jimmy looked sad and nodded his red head.

THE DEATH OF NELSON

Most boys and girls have heard a great deal about Admiral Nelson, and they have been told that all children should be brave, and every boy and girl should be true to the call of duty. These lessons are well worth learning, but there is yet another one that comes to us from Horatio Nelson. Before the battle of Trafalgar had been going on for long the admiral was wounded by a musket-ball, and strong sailors gently carried him from the deck of the "Victory" to the cock-pit below. Everyone was sorry, and doctors came round him and shook their heads, saying one to another that his life could not be saved, and that soon the name of Horatio Nelson would be on the list of the brave men who had died for England.

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This was very sad, and certain friends of the admiral came away from the fighting so that they might help him to bear what was coming. They were very troubled, and as they stood round him their sympathy made it easier for Nelson; but it

seemed as though, as he grew weaker, he wanted something even more, and the soul of the great admiral was moved in his last hours to a great tenderness, and he yearned for love. Feeling thus, he turned to a great, strong officer who had been his friend for many years, and said, "Kiss me, Hardy." And Hardy bent down over Nelson and kissed him just as a mother will kiss a tired child who is going to sleep.

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Nelson was great and Nelson was brave, yet he was tender-hearted. That is the great lesson of this incident for all boys and girls. Sometimes we think that being tender-hearted and caring to love and be loved do not matter. Boys in particular are very much ashamed of anything like tenderness; and I once knew a lad who thought he was too old to kiss his mother. But surely, if the strong, brave Nelson was affectionate, even the most manly boys and the most womanly girls ought to be the same. Why, Jesus Christ, who was God, and who was also the manliest man who ever lived, was all tenderness; and His teaching about His Father was that God is Love. The way to grow more tender-hearted is first to think, and

not to stifle the affection that rises up in little hearts. Then look much to Jesus Christ, and remember how He loves everybody, and learn how much He cares for boys and girls, and try and be as kind and gentle to all as Jesus Christ is to you. This applies especially to relatives. Children ought so to love everybody in the same house that there are no quarrels, and they ought to be very much ashamed after they have been nasty to one another.

GIANT LAZINESS

This is a story that is partly true and partly made up. Once upon a time there were some boys and girls whose mothers sent them off on a journey to the City of Learning; and they set off together walking hand-in-hand up the white road in the sunlight. Soon they saw first the towers and then the massive walls of the city, and before long they were in front of the gate. The gate was made of iron, and it was wide and high and strong. Also it was closed, and over the portal was the word Lessons. The children spelt the word out, and just as they had finished they heard a sleepy voice say, "Oh, dear! talking again!" At the sound they all turned, and there was a big black giant lying partly propped up against the wall. He had his eyes half-opened and he yawned. The yawn took a long time for his mouth was not small, but at last it was over, and he sat still and looked peevish. "Why did you wake me up?" he asked crossly. "Please," said the eldest boy, "we didn't know." "Know!" said the giant irritably, "Know! Of course you

didn't. The children who know are all inside the gate." Then he shook himself and added, "There! I'm like lots of children, for I am often cross when I wake up. But let's be friends. Come and lie down." The children hung back, and one asked, "What's your name?" "Oh," said the giant, "my name is Indolence, but I am called Laziness for short. It's a letter less. When people have used my short name twenty-six times, they have saved an alphabet." "I see," spoke up the eldest boy; "but we can't lie down. We are going through the gate." "The Gate of Lessons," said Giant Laziness, "is hard to push open, and you have come a long way, and are tired and want rest." And he snored at once, and because the children were a little tired and very silly, they lay down near him and went to sleep.

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As he was sleeping, the eldest boy was disturbed by a gentle hand that was laid on his shoulder. He looked up, and there was a great shining angel. "Why," he asked, "who are you?" "I," was the answer, "am the Angel of Earnestness, and I am sorry to find you asleep right before the Gate of Lessons." "Why?" faltered the boy. "Because,"

"WE ARE GOING THROUGH THE GATE."

said the angel, "the Gate of Lessons leads into the City of Learning, and in the city are the temples of true success and the high roads of goodness; and from the city one can start on journeys to all places that are worth going to." "Do you mean," asked the lad, "that children who learn their lessons have the best chance of becoming the men and women who please God?" "I do," was the answer, "but too many of them listen to the Giant Indolence and are lazy, and——" "Dear me!" broke in the boy, "I understand. How can I do better?" "Let me come with you," replied the angel. "Whenever you are in earnest and try hard, I am by your side helping. You do not always see me, but I am there." Even as he spoke the lad saw him no more, but feeling he was not far away he awoke his companions and told his story. Giant Laziness woke up also and tried to make fun of it. But the children believed their friend, and together they got up and pushed hard against the Gate of Lessons. It was not easy to move, but each child felt the Angel of Earnestness was among them, and was pushing, too. At last the gate opened, and they entered the City of Learning, and found it far more beautiful and wonderful than they had thought. When they were able to speak, a small boy said,

"I say, I felt the Angel of Earnestness was helping. Didn't you?" The other children nodded, and one little girl added, "There was someone else as well. I felt there were two." "Of course!" said the eldest boy. "Mother always tells me that when children try hard at lessons or anything right, Jesus Christ always does all He can to help."

WHAT TO WEIGH

One summer day I was at Laxey, in the Isle of Man. In the village there is a big wheel, but what interested me most was a small boy. He had no collar, though there were many buttons on his waistcoat. He had a round face, and when he smiled it was like the full moon coming from behind a cloud. To make a living he looked after a weighing machine, which stood by the roadside for the use of passers-by at a penny a time. The boy smiled at a friend who was with me, and to please the lad he got on the stand of the machine and was weighed. When he paid his penny the boy looked at it carefully to make sure it was a good one, and after spinning it in the air, he caught it and put it in his pocket.

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After this he was quiet for a time, and then he did a curious thing. He got on the weighing machine and he weighed himself. This interested me and I began to ask questions. "What are you doing?" I asked. "Weighing myself," he said. "Oh," I

replied. "Oh," said the small boy. "Any fatter than last time?" I asked. "No," came the reply, "but I often weighs myself after a customer." This answer set me thinking, and I thought it would be a good thing if other children imitated the small boy. I hardly expect you have a weighing machine, but we all do a lot of weighing. When you say what you think about other people it means you have weighed them. How would it be if we weighed ourselves after we have weighed others? For instance, suppose that when you say, "Mary has a bad temper," you ask yourself what kind of a temper you have. Suppose that when you say, "Tom cheats at games," you stop and think whether you always play fair. Would not all this help? One thing all boys and girls must do. They must think about Jesus Christ and see how good and pure He is. Then as they think what He is, they must weigh themselves and ask whether they are like Him. This will make them sad. But if they look at Him again and pray, He will help them to be good tempered and truthful, and kind and Christlike in all things.

A SPRING STORY

The snowdrop and the violet and the primrose were all having their winter sleep beneath the ground near the roots of a great oak when the spring called them and they woke up. Waking up and getting up are two different things, even with children; and all the flowers waited until the sun made them understand it was time they were stirring. Then the snowdrop got up first. He did not mind the winter cold, and he hurried so fast that his white blossom showed itself in the hedge long before the rest of the world had heard the call of the springtide; and when he was gone the primrose spoke rather unkindly to the violet. "Silly little thing you are," he said. "I will race you above ground, and I could give you a week's start and beat you. Come on, let's grow." And the primrose began to take in all the nourishment he could get from the earth and the moisture that was around him; and because it was just like having a Sunday dinner every day of the week, he grew very fast. When it was clear that he was beating the violet he

became scornful and said, "Ha! Yah! I don't believe you will ever make your way above ground, and even if you do no one will see you unless they look for you on purpose, and then if I am there no one will notice you." Such unkind words made the other little flower feel very sad; but a violet never answers back, and he was just sorry inside and said nothing.

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The great oak near whose roots the violet and the primrose lived heard all that he said, and more than once he felt so cross with the unkind primrose that he murmured uneasily overhead among his bare branches. He watched the race with a great deal of interest, and one day he was very sorry to see that the violet had stopped trying. So in a voice that was not at all rough for a really strong tree, he said to the violet, "Hulloa, little flower, got the blues already?" This made the violet smile, and he said, "What else could a violet have?" "Well," answered the oak, "a violet might have a little common sense. I know that the primrose has not spoken at all nicely, and it is plain that he has beaten you and will be above ground before you. But the great God who made flowers and trees and children so that the world might be beautiful did

not send us here to beat one another, but so that each of us should do his best." These words somehow comforted the violet a little, but he only replied, "Even if I do try I do not seem able to do very much." "Well, well," said the oak, "we must all of us do just what we can and then someone is sure to be pleased with us. Why, do you know that once I was only a little acorn, and because a young beech tree was growing near me and was beating me I thought I would give up; but a worm I knew came and scolded me, and said that if I did not do my best to grow he would eat me. This frightened me, and I grew and grew, and now I am one of the finest trees all along the roadside. So cheer up, little violet, and whenever the sun comes to meet you, you try and get towards him; and though I am afraid that you will nearly always have the blues, yet keep struggling up and everything will be all right." Just then a woodpecker came and tapped on the oak, and he had to turn away from the violet to attend to his caller.

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What the oak said did the violet a lot of good, and he plucked up courage and tried hard, and though the primrose was in flower five days earlier,

it was not long before he was modestly hanging down his head near where the primrose blossoms were lifting up wan faces to the light. A week later the sun came out brightly about eleven o'clock, and just before twelve a lady, who looked pale and ill, was wheeled along in a bath-chair. By her side ran a little boy; and he talked so fast and was so pleased to be in the sun that the flowers said to each other, "Here is someone else who has heard the call of the spring. We wish his mother did not look so ill. Then all the flowers held their breath, for they heard the little boy saying. "Mother dear, I would like to pick you a flower from the hedge side. Would you care for a primrose to make you glad when you look at it?" His mother smiled, and answered, "Well, little man, any flower my boy gives me always pleases his mother; but mother has not seen a violet all this year, and it would please her if her boy could find one." "I am sorry," said the boy, "that I left Gyp at home. He can always find anything in a hedge, and one day he found a rat." "Oh but," said his mother, "dogs do not find violets. He is all right for animals, but no good for flowers. My little boy must go and look for himself." The boy looked on one side of the road, and then he came back and

said, "Mother, I cannot find anything except primroses, but I am going to try the other side." He looked on the other side, and at last he turned a rather sad face towards the invalid chair and said, "Mother dear, I am afraid I shall not be able to find anything but primroses, but here is a very big one." And he reached out his hand towards the primrose that had scoffed at and beaten the violet. The violet heard all and longed to show himself; but he was nervous, and only hung down his head the more. Then the mother of the little boy said, "I believe my son is in too much of a hurry. Let him look carefully all round, and I am almost certain he will find a violet somewhere." The boy looked all round as he was told, and then gave a tremendous shout. "Mother," he said, "I have found a violet." And soon he had picked it and had brought it to her. "Bless you, little man," she said, "you remind me of your father." "Do I?" said the boy. "Did he give you a violet before he went out to the war?" "I have it at home now," answered the mother, "and this one shall be kept with it." And somehow she looked as though she were half-crying and half-pleased; and when she put the stem of the violet through a buttonhole in the jacket she was wearing her own

face was very bright. "Why, mother," said the little boy, "you look pleased and sorry both at once, and I like to see you look pleased, for ever since you had the black-edged letter about father you have looked sorry all the time." His mother smiled again, but answered nothing, and just before the bath-chair started the tree called out in a voice that only the violet and the primrose could hear, "There, little violet, did I not tell you that if you did your best it would be worth doing? I wish you could tell that little boy that if, as he grows up, he does his best, even though sometimes other boys will beat him at running, or lessons, or cricket, yet if he always does his best God will be just as pleased with him as his dear mother is with the violet he gave her." Then the invalid-chair passed on, and the mother, and the boy, and the violet were all of them glad together in the sun.

THE LAZY BAT

On summer evenings in the country you can often see strange shapes flitting through the air, and many a boy who never knows his lessons is able to tell you that they are bats. If you caught one and held it so that it did not hurt, you would notice first of all two wide but narrow wings, with ribs not unlike those in an umbrella. Right in the middle of the wings you would see a huddled, fluffy little body, with a head rather like a rat, and two ears that stand out. Its legs would remind you of those of a bird, and it would have claws it can use as a kind of hand. You must remember what it looks like, or else you will not understand this tale, which is too good to be true.

* * * *

Once upon a time there was a young bat who liked eating a great deal more than he liked work. Do not blush if you know someone who is like him in this, but read on. The bat was so lazy that instead of flying about to catch insects for his own

meals, he would just hang upside down on a branch with his mouth open. When a fly or gnat strayed inside, he smacked his lips together, unless he was feeling so very idle that even that was too much trouble. All this made his mother sad, and so that he might not get too thin, she and his father used to drive swarms of gnats to where he was, and thus they managed to keep him much fatter than he deserved to be. But at last he disgusted them so much that they made up their minds to speak to him sternly. "Come," said his father, "why don't you fly about and catch insects for yourself?" "I cannot," he squeaked in reply; "I am a rat." "Then," asked his mother, "why don't you run about and pick up little beetles and ants?" "Oh," he answered with a yawn, "I could not run; I am a bird." The tale ends there, and I am sorry, for I think it ought to go on and say that his parents left him to starve until he learnt better.

* * * *

What did he need to learn? "Not to be lazy." Quite right. "To feed himself." Most children can do that, and the greedy ones never know when to stop—nor where! But what else did he need to learn? Was it not, never to make excuses that

are only make-believe? Of course, we all laugh at the young bat, but some boys and girls always have six excuses for not attempting anything they do not wish to do, and others generally have seven excuses for what they have done wrong through naughtiness or carelessness. Of course, the children who read this never make more than one excuse at a time, but what sort of an excuse is it generally? Jesus Christ loves children so much that many of their excuses grieve Him, and once He spoke very strongly indeed about foolish people who try to excuse themselves, instead of doing at once what is right. Never offer to mother, or father, or teacher an excuse you could not make to God, who knows all about you; and instead of trying to prove we are always right, and in place of making some flimsy excuse when we have done wrong, or are lazy, or have left something undone, let us say we are sorry, and try and do better next time.

AN AFRICAN DOG

Foolish children sometimes think all missionary stories are dull, but this is a missionary story, and it is not dull at all. Many boys and girls have heard of Dr. Moffat, the great missionary to the dark natives of South Africa. It was he who first told this tale, and people liked it so much that he repeated it more than once. In a village where Dr. Moffat lived the people were called Bechuanas; and those who had not learnt from Jesus Christ to be gentle and kind were fierce and cruel. The headman of this village was not a Christian. He hardly ever behaved properly, and he was as nasty as he could be to most people he knew. Besides his own nastiness, he also kept a dog which was good at growling and magnificent at barking, but best of all at biting. When this dog had nothing else to do he used to snap at the heels of the passers-by; and, as they never wore shoes or stockings, if they were not quick he often got a good bite. This made people angry; but because he

was the dog of the headman nobody dared to interfere.

* * * *

Among the people at whom the dog sometimes barked there was an old woman who was trying hard to be a Christian. Someone had taught her to read, and Dr. Moffat had given her a book in which was printed in her own language the Psalms you can find in your Bible. She was very proud of this book, for its covers were made of sheep skin. Books that have leather covers are really bound in the skin of some animal that has been tanned, and her book was covered in a piece of skin that had been taken off a sheep, and then steeped in something and dried to make it more lasting. But the work had not been very well done, and the book cover still had a scent of something very like meat. One Sunday afternoon this old lady came out of her little house and sat down in the open to read her psalm book. It is funny how often when old people read books they somehow go to sleep; and even some children who ought to know better will now and then fall asleep over their lessons. After this poor woman had been reading for a few minutes she shut her eyes, and soon her head began to nod, and it was not long before she

was really asleep. While she slept the dog came along sniff-snuff for anything he could find, and to his great joy he scented the psalm book. When he looked at it he must have thought it was a new kind of sandwich; but he did not wait to ask anybody about it, he just took hold of the covers and swallowed it down, sheep skin and psalms and all. The poor old lady woke up, and was sorry and rather cross, and while she was scolding the dog up came the headman to whom he belonged. The headman heard the story, and at once became very angry. He had noticed that black people who read their Bible were soon no longer fierce and bloodthirsty, but gentle and kind; and he was afraid that in future his fierce dog would neither bark nor bite. The neighbours came round, and there was a great deal of noise, until at last the headman took the dog away home to his own house. The next day the dog probably had a little pain inside, but he did not behave any better. He barked and snapped just the same as ever; and all the psalms he had eaten did not seem to have done him any good.

* * * *

Few children who read this have ever tried to eat a psalm book or any other kind of book. Indeed,

some of them so plaster their lesson books with grimy fingers that they are too dirty for even that South African dog to eat them. But for all that, there are many children who are rather like the dog. The dog was none the better for having psalms inside him. Many boys and girls know a number of texts. They have been told them, and they have learnt them, and somehow they have got them right inside. But the texts they know make no more difference to them than did all the psalms to the dog who ate them between his dinner and his tea. Why is it that children do not try and remember texts, and behave as they tell them? There was one very good text which the dog swallowed. You can find it in Psalm xxxvii., and the first part of the eighth verse, where it reads, "Cease from anger and forsake wrath." If you do not know that text, learn it off and say it aloud to mother; and when you have learnt it, pray to Jesus Christ and ask Him to help you to be a gentle and good-tempered boy, or a kind and good-natured girl. If we know many texts and do not try and act up to them we are like the dog who swallowed the psalm book, and only had a little pain inside for his trouble.

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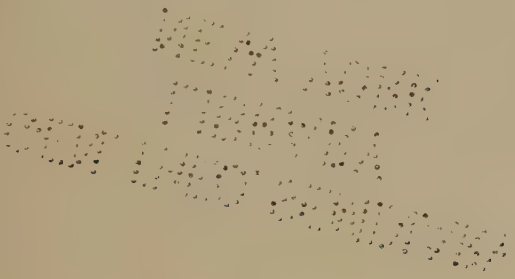

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